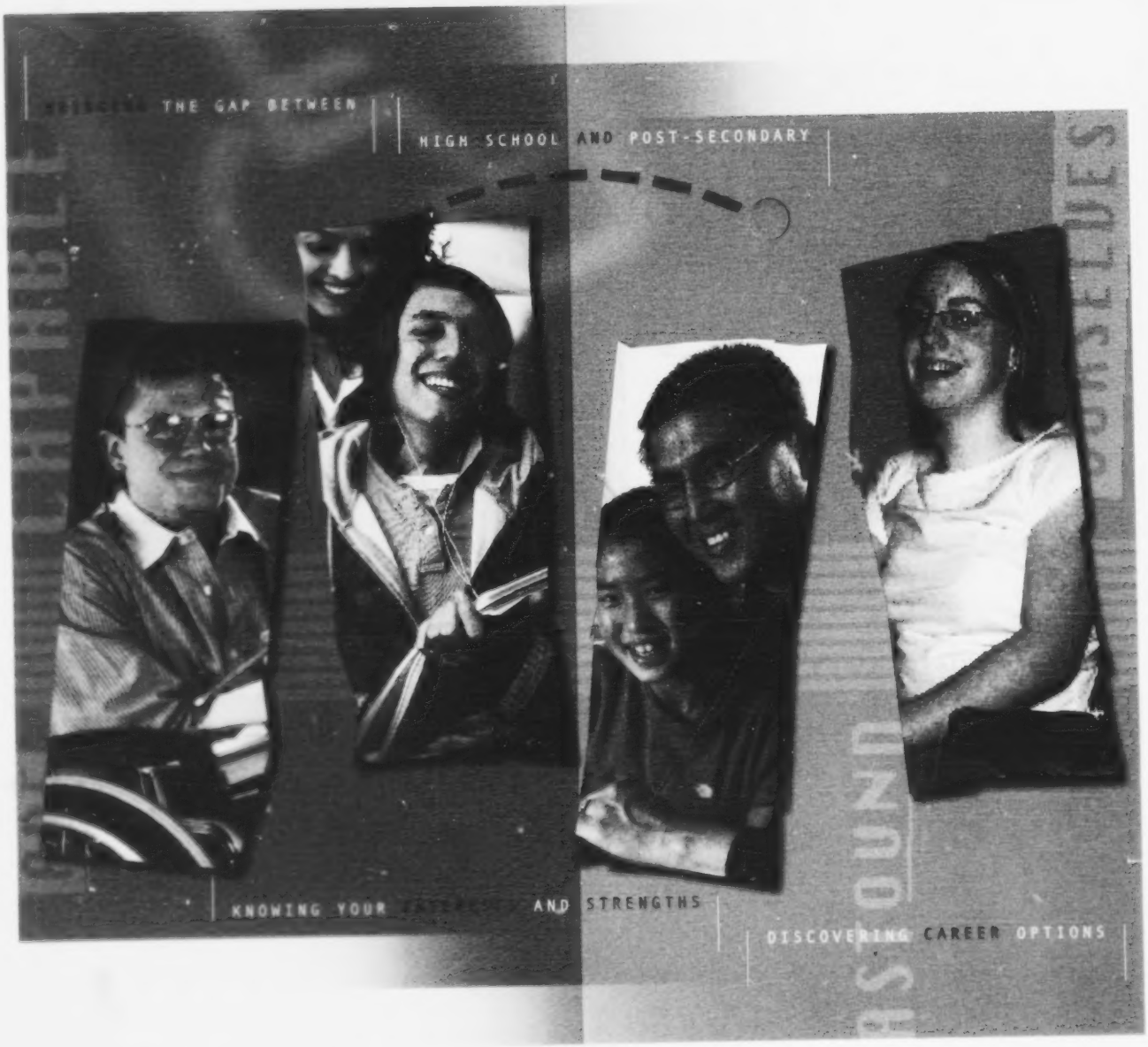
Transition
PLANNING GUIDE

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

AND THEIR FAMILIES



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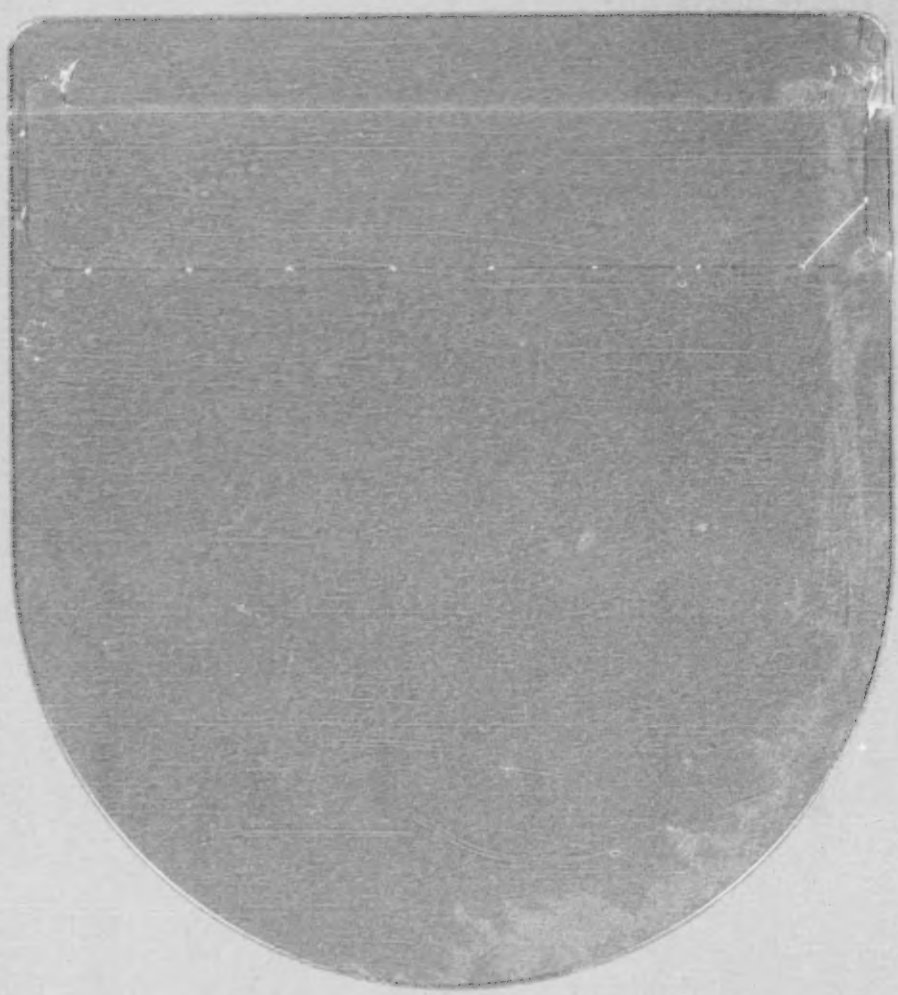

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Introduction

WELCOME! IF YOU ARE A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY— or the parent of a student with a disability— and you are interested in post-secondary education, this guide is for you. It offers information and ideas to help you plan the journey from high school to the world of post-secondary education. It looks at issues and challenges that all young people and their families face when they prepare for this transition. It also looks at issues and challenges that are unique to students with disabilities.

This book aims to encourage you to play an active role in this important process and to feel confident that you can take this exciting journey.

A word about words...

The book uses the following words in specific ways:

Students with disabilities — This guide refers to disabilities in general terms that are intended to include different types of physical, mental health, learning, intellectual, neurological, behavioural and developmental disabilities as well as hearing and vision loss. It does not provide information about specific conditions.

Student(s) — In this book the term means student with a disability.

Parent(s) — This word means the person taking the role of an adult involved in the student's life. This person could be a parent, legal guardian, grandparent or other family member, teacher, counsellor or mentor.

Disability — This term refers to a permanent disability, defined as *a functional limitation by a physical or mental impairment that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in studies at a post-secondary level or the labour force and is expected to remain with the person for the rest of the person's expected natural life.*

Transition — This term uses this word to mean change, moving from one place or one situation to another; or a journey.

How to use this guide

A lot of information is presented and it covers a very complex topic. Do not feel that you need to read it, cover to cover, in one sitting. The transition to post-secondary education can take months or even years—think of this guide as a resource that you keep coming back to as you need more, or different, information.

As big as it is, this book will not give you all the answers you will need to make this transition. But it will start you thinking about questions to ask and steps to take. The resources listed at the back of the guide in part three will also direct you to useful Internet websites, contacts, government and other types of information.

How the content is organized

The guide is divided into three parts:

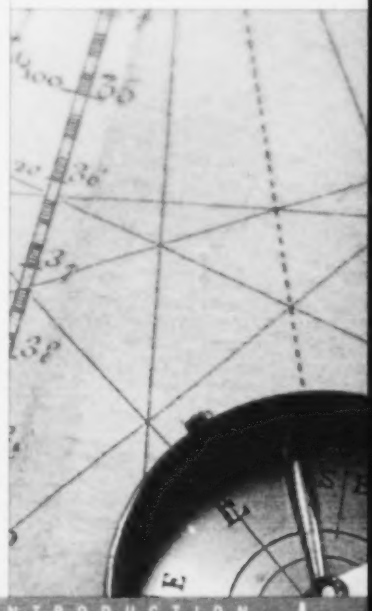
- part one — For Students
- part two — For Students and Parents
- part three — For Parents

The best way for you to make the most of the information is to **read the whole book**. Very little content repeats from section to section. You will find activities and checklists throughout to help you plan and keep track of the steps you are taking.

On the next page in "Success Stories," you will meet four young people who have made the transition to post-secondary and beyond. Their stories continue throughout the book, giving you an opportunity to share their dreams, challenges and successes — and think about your own!

If you are a student, you can start taking the steps in part one today. Then, depending on your interest and where you are on your journey (Grade 9? Grade 12?), check out part two. It covers challenges like: Where will you go? How will you pay for it? Part three tells you about your parent's role in the process.

If you are a parent, it is a good idea to read the entire book to gain an overview of the transition process.



HE FOUR PEOPLE YOU ARE ABOUT TO MEET have generously agreed to share their stories. Like you, each of them has a disability. Each of them has made the journey from high school to a post-secondary program.

if we did what we are capable of doing, we would astound ourselves.

Thomas Edison

Today, **Kim Gerritsen**, 26, is a special education teacher in Calgary. She has a bachelor of education degree from the University of Alberta and has just finished a master's degree at the University of Calgary. Yet at one point, Kim was told that her learning disability was more severe than that of any student who had ever attended the U of A.

Roman Sokolowski, 22, says he was "loud, unpredictable and short-tempered" in elementary school. As a teen, he struggled with depression and a lack of interest in school before being diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (a type of autism). Today, Roman is in his fourth year of arts at Athabasca University, majoring in Political Economy and Information Systems, while maintaining a grade point average of 3.97.

Renée Aeyelts, 21, coped with dyslexia all the way through elementary, junior and senior high school without receiving adequate support in a small town school with very few resources. Now she is in the fourth year of a bachelor of arts program at Mount Royal College.

James Stainton, 25, has been blind since birth. A downhill skier from the age of five, James is currently attending at the University of Alberta, majoring in psychology. While taking a year off from university, James completed an advanced woodworking and design course at NAIT and works part-time making furniture and doing finishing work in the house construction industry. He also volunteers with children with disabilities.

Continued on page 1

For students

PART 01

DISCOVERING CAREER OPTIONS
LEARN TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF
FINDING OUT ABOUT YOU
KNOWING YOUR
HOW DO YOU GET THERE FROM HERE

01	Planning for change
02	Finding out about you
14	Your next step: post-secondary
15	Your transition plan: making it work
19	Build your skills
21	Creating a portfolio
22	Are you ready?
25	When you get there

When one door closes,
another opens: but we
often look so long and
so regretfully upon the
closed door that we do
not see the one which
has opened for us.

Alexander Graham Bell

Planning for change

It is never too early, and it is never too late, to start the transition planning process.

TRANSITION MEANS CHANGE. In a transition, you move from one place or one situation to another. You have already been through many transitions in your life — from baby to little kid to teenager, from kindergarten to Grade 1 and from elementary to junior high, to name just a few.

The transition you make when you leave high school can be both exciting and challenging. It means thinking about your dreams and goals and about who you are and who you want to become.

This transition is a journey and, as most travellers will tell you, the smoothest journeys often begin with a good map.

Your transition plan is the map. You create it through a process known as transition planning, which helps you decide what steps to take and what direction to head in.

Transition planning involves:

- knowing your interests, strengths and challenges
- finding out about careers
- understanding the options for post-secondary education
- developing a plan to pay for post-secondary study

To create an effective transition plan, you will need the help of a team. Your transition planning team will probably include your parents and other adults in your life. It should definitely include you!

The best way to make sure that your plan reflects who you are and what you want is to take an active part in the transition planning process. To find out how, check out the information about transition planning in part two.

Your transition plan prepares you to leave high school and take your next step. What will that step be?

Good question. And it is one that only you can answer. Not to worry — you will find many sources of support and inspiration.

To answer this question, start by finding out about yourself — your dreams, goals, skills and strengths. Self-knowledge gives you a firm foundation for exploring career options and creating your transition plan. In the next section, you will find exercises and ideas to help you get started.

Kim, Roman, Renee and James went through this process, too. How did they handle it? Read on.

Success stories

Kim recalls that in elementary school, she had enjoyed helping out in a class for students with severe intellectual disabilities. "In high school for work experience they asked me where I wanted to go," she says. "So I went back to that elementary school class to help out again. I loved it!" After this experience, Kim knew what she wanted to do.

Roman remembers that in junior high, becoming an adult seemed like a distant prospect. He was "naive and unaware" when it came to career exploration. Perhaps because of his parents' influence, he always assumed he would attend a post-secondary program. "The RESP they had for me made that a concrete assumption," he says. Sometime in junior high, Roman became aware that his marks would affect the courses he could take in high school. "I realized that I had to try and keep my marks up and my options open," he says.

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You finish school—then what?

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How did Kim, Roman, Renée and James discover and explore their career paths?

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FUTURE POWER LINEMAN?

For information on this and other trades, contact your local Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

Finding out about you

USE THE ACTIVITIES in this section to develop your self-knowledge. The more you know about yourself, the better prepared you will be to make decisions about your future.

Know your strengths

Identifying your strengths is an important way to develop self-knowledge. Thinking about your strengths helps you recognize and act on opportunities. Use this exercise to identify and build on the strengths you already have. Include the strengths you use in all areas of your life, not just school.

My strengths

List two positive experiences you have had in the last 12 months.

List four things that really interest you.

List four things you do well.

List your two favourite classes.

List four people who you can count on for help and support.

List six positive words that describe you.

Adapted from the Government of Alberta, Make School Work for You: A Resource for Junior and Senior High Students Who Want to Be More Successful Learners, (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2001). To order this resource visit the Learning Resources website at www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca

During her year abroad, Renée's career goals began to take shape.

How did Kim, Roman, Renée and James discover and explore their career paths?

Continued

Renée always knew that she wanted to work with people but it wasn't until her year abroad (between high school and college) that her career goals began to take shape. Working as a nanny in the Netherlands, she had the opportunity to spend time with her aunt, a psychologist. This experience awakened her interest in the field.

James began to realize sometime in junior or senior high school, that he was very good with people and that he valued talking about mutual problems with his friends. This interest has led him to psychology with a plan to become a counsellor.

Continued on page 20

Know your challenges

Everybody faces challenges. When you know your challenges, you can figure out how to work with them most effectively.

My challenges Answer only the questions that apply to you.

Knowing my disability

What would I like to find out about my disability?

What disability-related concerns affect me at school?

What disability-related concerns affect me in the community?

To find out more about your disability, check out the links at **www.accd.net**

Knowing my strategies and accommodations

What strategies/accommodations do I use at school?

What strategies/accommodations do I use in the community?

What other strategies/accommodations/supports do I know about that would help me do better at school or make it easier for me to take part in community activities?

How do I find out about other accommodation/strategies/supports that might help me?

Who should I ask about this?

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STRATEGIES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

A strategy is a plan or approach that helps you to learn more effectively. For example, you can use strategies to motivate you or to help you listen better in class.

An accommodation is a change in the typical way a student is expected to learn, complete assignments or take part in class. Accommodations include things like alternative reading material or physical changes to the classroom. You may already know a lot about accommodations but to find out more, see "Understanding Accommodations and Assessments" in part three.

Know your challenges
continued

Knowing how I learn

How do I learn in the subjects I enjoy?

How does this compare with my experience in the subjects I do not enjoy?

How do I complete assignments in the subjects I enjoy?

life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.

Anais Nin

How does this compare with my experience in the subjects I do not enjoy?

Some students memorize; some students write study notes; some repeat what they study out loud. What is the best way for **me** to study for tests?

Some students write tests in a quiet room by themselves or where they can move around. What is the best way for me to take tests?

When do I need help at school — in certain subjects? In certain topics? On projects?

Who do I ask for help at school?

What subjects are the most challenging for me? Why?

What subjects do I like the least? Why?

Creating a skills inventory

Everyone needs skills to succeed in school, in the workplace and in other parts of daily life. Technical skills (like knowing how to use a certain kind of software or how to operate a certain kind of equipment) can be important but employability skills—the skills that this activity focuses on—are even more important.

What employability skills do you have? Which skills do you need to achieve your personal or career goals?

My skills Check "yes" if you have the skill. Check "not yet" if you want to develop it:

Yes	Not yet	
		Communicate
		read and understand information in a variety of forms (e.g., words, graphs, charts, diagrams)
		communicate so others pay attention and understand
		pay attention and ask questions to learn about and value other's points of view
		share information in a variety of ways (e.g., speaking, writing, e-mail)
		Manage information
		find and gather information using appropriate technology and systems
		organize information for future use
		use and apply knowledge and skills from a variety of areas
		Use numbers
		decide what needs to be measured or calculated
		observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology
		make estimates and check calculations
		Think and solve problems
		assess situations and identify problems
		seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts
		recognize both the human and the technical aspects of a problem
		identify the root cause of a problem
		explore possible solutions
		evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions
		act on solutions
		check to see if a solution works and improve it if necessary
		Work with others
		understand and work within a group
		ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear
		respect and support the points of view and contributions of others
		accept and provide feedback in a helpful and considerate manner
		share information and expertise
		know when to lead, support or motivate a group
		manage and resolve conflict when appropriate
		Participate in projects and tasks
		plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives and outcomes
		develop a plan, seek feedback, test, revise and implement
		select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task or project
		monitor the success of a project or task and identify ways to improve

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Creating a skills inventory
continued

Yes	Not yet	
		Demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours
		have confidence in yourself and your abilities
		deal with people, problems and situations with honesty and integrity
		recognize your own and other people's good efforts
		take care of your personal health
		show interest, initiative and effort
		Be responsible
		set goals and priorities balancing school, work and personal life
		plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
		assess, weigh and manage risk
		account for your own actions and the actions of your group
		contribute to your community and be socially responsible
		Be adaptable
		work independently or as part of a team
		carry out multiple tasks or projects
		identify and suggest alternative ways to achieve goals and get the job done
		respond constructively to change
		learn from your mistakes and accept feedback
		cope with uncertainty
		Learn continuously
		assess personal strengths and areas for development
		set your own learning goals
		keep learning
		Work safely
		follow health and safety practices and procedures

Adapted with permission from *Employability Skills 2000+* Brochure 2000E/F (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2000).

Take the following steps when you have completed the "My skills" activity:

- Get feedback from others, such as your parents, a favourite teacher or a friend.
  - Ask them to assess your skills using the same activity.
  - Notice where their assessment is different from yours.
  - Ask them for ideas about how to develop specific skills.
- Practice the skills you have. For example:
  - Make and follow a schedule to finish an assignment on time.
  - Listen to the point of view of someone you do not agree with.
  - Use your positive attitude in a class you do not enjoy.
- Plan to develop the skills you want to grow. For example:
  - Learn to use a new software program. (If you need assistive technology to do this, who can help you access it?)
  - Brainstorm and problem-solve with your parents about an issue like allowance or curfew.
  - Become active in a community group or school club.
- Keep track of your skills in a résumé. To find out more about résumés and other job search tools, check out **www.alis.gov.ab.ca**
- Update your skills assessment regularly. What new skills are you developing?

A vision of your future

Knowing your skills, strengths and challenges is like finding out where you are on a map. Next, you need to decide where you want to go. This activity invites you to think about where you might be headed and to create a vision of your future.

Answer the questions now (leave those you cannot answer blank). Then try this exercise again at regular intervals—three months, six months, one year and so on—to see how your vision is changing.

My future

Three to five years after high school, I would like to be (working, taking post-secondary courses, travelling, etc.)

Three to five years after high school, I want to be living (on my own, with friends, with my family, etc.)

To live on my own or with friends, I would need to learn how to

Eventually, the kind of work I would like to do is

To do this work, I would use these skills:

To do this work, I might need these accommodations/strategies:

Three to five years after high school, my involvement in the community will be

To get around in my community, I will

For fun and relaxation, I will be involved in

I am concerned about the future because

I am excited about the future because

SOME DEFINITIONS

Job:
a set of specific duties performed for a specific employer. "Web design coordinator at ABC Online" is a job.

Occupation:
a group of similar jobs. "Web design" is an occupation.

Career:
the overall course of a person's work-related activities. Your career includes the learning experiences you have had and the roles you have played, as well as the jobs and occupations you have worked in.

Exploring career options

Now is a good time to start exploring different kinds of career options through work experience, volunteering, extra-curricular activities and paid work. These kinds of experiences will:

- introduce you to a variety of work settings
- give you the opportunity to try out your skills and learn new ones
- let you find out more about possible career paths.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Career exploration is an ongoing process!

You may change your mind several times about the occupations and programs you are interested in before you reach post-secondary.

Even after you complete your post-secondary education, your interests, experience and skills will continue to lead you in new directions.

When it comes to your career, never stop exploring!

Career options

Use this activity to begin exploring career options. Look back at the previous activities to help you fill in the answers.

These are personal skills and interests I want to develop by exploring career options:

Three examples of extra-curricular activities that I have been or would like to be involved in are:

Three volunteer activities in my community that I'd like to try are:

These activities match my skills and interests because:

These opportunities would be a good place to use and develop my skills and interests because:

You may already be interested in some occupations or you may still be searching for direction. Use the Internet to explore careers you might be interested in. Check out these sites:

www.nextsteps.org: links to occupational profiles that you can search from A to Z

www.alis.gov.ab.ca: the Alberta Learning Information Service

www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/home.shtml: the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Three examples of work experience that I have or would like to have are:

These experiences are, or would be, a good place to use and develop my skills and interests because:

These sites maintain web pages designed to help students discover career options and research trends. They also describe employment rates for graduates from different post-secondary programs, the occupations in which they found work, typical earnings and much more.

Adapted from the Alberta Government Planning for Post-Secondary Mini-Course. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Advanced Education, 2004.

Setting goals

Even though you may not know what career direction you will choose, it is a good idea to practise setting goals. By setting goals for personal growth, skills development, learning or career exploration, you create a sense of purpose. You practise the skills you need to set and achieve goals, which will help you through the transition from high school to post-secondary studies and beyond.

A **long-term goal** is often set for a year or more in the future; for example, "I will be accepted into a web design program by the time I graduate from high school." Usually, you reach a long-term goal by achieving several smaller, short-term goals.

A **short-term goal** is typically set for a time, hours, days or weeks in the future; for example, "By the end of the month, I will finish the design for my website homepage."

Use the next activity to identify something you want to achieve—a long-term goal. You may want to use this activity for several different goals.

My goal

1. Create a wish list of several things you would like to do when you have finished high school.

2. Choose one of the things from your list to focus on. Circle it.

3. Identify the first major step you will need to take to fulfill your wish.

For example, if your wish is to run your own website development company, then a first major step could be to build a professional-looking portfolio of examples of your work in web development. Is this goal specific, measurable, achievable and realistic?

Is it time-limited? It is, if you refine it this way: *"I will build a professional-looking portfolio of examples of my work in web development* ***by the time I graduate from high school.****"*

Next, decide what steps you will need to take to create a professional-looking portfolio. For example, do you need to take an evening course in web development?

4. Make an action plan.

Identify the things that stand between you and your goal. For example, *"I don't have enough time to take a web development course in the evening."*

THE BEST GOALS ARE SMART

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-limited

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THE BEST GOALS ARE SMART

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
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1. Create a wish list of several things you would like to do when you have finished high school.

2. Choose one of the things from your list to pursue further. Circle it.

3. Identify the first small step you will need to take to fulfill your wish.

For example, if your wish is to enrol in a post-secondary development program, the first step could be to build a professional looking portfolio that showcases your work in web development. Is this goal specific, measurable, achievable and realistic?

Is it time-limited? If not, it will be if you rephrase it like this: *"I will build a professional looking portfolio that showcases my work in web development by the time I graduate from high school."*

Next, decide what steps you will need to take to create a professional looking portfolio. For example, do you need to take an evening course in web development?

4. Make an action plan.

Identify the things that stand between you and your goal. For example, *"I don't have enough time to take a web development course at the moment."*

Setting goals

continued

Then identify the steps you can take to get around the things that stand in your way. For example, *"I will use my spare to finish my homework." "I will limit my extra-curricular activities to free up time for the course."*

5. Use positive self-talk. If you have a goal that you think you may have trouble achieving, then give yourself a pep-talk. Use positive statements like:

"I will achieve success in this course."

"I am reaching my goals."

"I can do this!"

6. Visualize. See yourself achieving this goal and enjoying the rewards.

My wish is to

My long-term goal is to

The short-term goals that will achieve my long-term goal are

Adapted from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series. (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Advanced Education, 2004).

INTERESTED IN LEARNING A TRADE?

For information, contact your local Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Reviewing and updating your academic goals

Reviewing and updating your academic goals every year is a good idea for a number of reasons:

- You may develop or discover new skills or interests.
- Post-secondary programs may change their eligibility requirements.
- Your high school may offer new courses.

At the end of each term, take a close look at your report card and think about the course areas that you would like to maintain, improve or explore. Use the chart below to organize your thoughts. Make enough copies of the chart to last through Grade 11.

Updating my academic goals

For the school year ending 20

Date:

My report card shows that I did well in the following areas. I would like to maintain my marks in these areas:

Some of the things I did that helped me achieve these marks are:

My report card shows that I need to improve in the following areas:

I will improve my marks in these areas by:

I would like to explore the following areas:

The post-secondary program(s) I am interested in require me to take courses in these areas:

My new goals for the coming year are:

My plans for achieving my goals are:

I have reviewed my academic goals.

Date: **Signed:**

Adapted from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series. (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Advanced Education, 2004).

you miss 100 percent of the shots you never take.

Wayne Gretzky

Developing a learning and career plan

A learning and career plan outlines important steps that you will take before you leave high school. It is a good idea to develop this plan early—you can use the information you gather for your learning and career plan to develop your transition plan. A learning and career plan will help you:

- identify requirements for post-secondary programs that interest you
- ensure that the post-secondary institutions you are interested in offer services and resources to support your disability
- get to know (online or in person) the programs and institutions you are interested in
- research application deadlines for post-secondary programs
- identify scholarships and their application deadlines
- keep track of skills development.

The following chart lists some of the key steps you will take to develop an effective learning and career plan. If you have already accomplished a task, put today's date in the "Date completed" column. Add any other steps you can think of in the blank rows at the end.

My learning and career plan

Task	Reason	Date started	Date completed
Identify your skills and interests	Your skills and interests are the keys to finding an occupation that is a good fit for you.		
Make a list of activities you do each day.	These activities help build the skills and explore the interests that you need for the jobs you may want.		
Research three or four occupations you might be interested in.	Knowing the responsibilities, rewards, skills and education involved in different occupations will help you narrow down your choices.		
Match the academic and skills requirements for each occupation with your own.	Charting requirements will help you determine your fit with occupations and show you areas you need to work on.		
Consider jobs or volunteer opportunities that could give you some experience with the occupations you are interested in.	Brainstorm a list of possibilities so you are ready to take advantage of opportunities.		
Use community experience and part-time work to gather new skills and strengthen existing ones.	Gaining first-hand experience will give you a better sense of which occupations may be the best options for you.		
If there is a job-shadowing or work experience program at your school, take part in it.	Gaining first-hand experience will give you a better sense of which occupations may be the best options for you.		

Task	Reason	Date started	Date completed
Find out if the accommodations and strategies you use now will transfer to the occupations you are interested in.	This information will help you figure out what additional accommodations or strategies you should check out.		
Update the information you have about the occupations and programs you are interested in several times during the year.	Requirements sometimes change, due to emerging trends or program changes at post-secondary institutions.		
Celebrate your new skills! Share them with others.	Taking time to reflect on and enjoy successes will give you the confidence and self-knowledge to pursue your career goals.		
Research post-secondary programs related to your career choices.	There may be options you have not explored.		
Check out the services and resources available at post-secondary institutions to support your disability.	These services and resources will enable you to succeed in your post-secondary program.		
Visit, online or in person, the institutions and programs you are interested in.	Getting a feel for the places and the people will help you choose the best program for you.		
Find out about application deadlines for post-secondary programs and scholarships.	Many deadlines are early in the year and missing them can be costly.		
Other			

Your next step: post-secondary

You may not feel ready to continue on to post-secondary studies right out of high school. If so, you may want to think about other possibilities that would expand your learning in other ways. During six months or a year "off," you could:

- volunteer in occupations that interest you
- work at a paying job
- check out post-secondary– take a course
- travel
- continue to explore and plan for post-secondary

AS YOU EXPLORE career options and occupations, you will notice that most of them require post-secondary training of some kind. It is estimated that 65 percent of new jobs in Alberta will require some form of post-secondary education in the 21st century.* High school is a stepping-stone to future learning, whether it is at a college or university, a technical school, or an apprenticeship program.

What are the benefits of post-secondary education?

A post-secondary education may be a requirement for jobs and occupations that you are interested in and it may also:

- help to ensure that you get work that stimulates and interests you
- help you obtain a higher quality of life, a better standard of living, greater job security and a higher income
- be an important aspect of your personal growth and development
- encourage you to make the most of your potential
- enable you to contribute to your community
- enable you to overcome some of the challenges people with disabilities face in the labour market.

How do you get there from here?

Act on your rights!

You have a right to a post-secondary education in an accessible environment. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.

The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Commission is responsible for human rights legislation in Alberta. The Commission has written a document called *Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Educational Institutions* (2004) to explain how post-secondary educational institutions have a **responsibility to accommodate** students with disabilities. It also explains the students' responsibilities. The publication is based on three sources:

- provincial human rights legislation
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- case law that interprets the Charter.

A duty to accommodate means that all educational institutions have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodation, up to the point of "undue hardship," in order to ensure that the educational environment does not have a discriminatory effect on students with disabilities.

To find out more about the duty to accommodate, visit **www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca**

Get funding!

Tuition, books and possibly, room and board — a post-secondary education comes with a price tag. For students with disabilities, assessments and accommodations may involve additional costs, which may be covered by government programs.

It is important for you and your parents to think about these financial costs and develop a plan to pay for your post-secondary education. To explore this topic in detail, check out part two of this guide.

Get planning!

Your transition plan is the key to making the move from high school to a post-secondary setting. You will find more information about creating a transition plan in part two of this guide.

If you jump ahead to part two, make sure you come back and read the next few sections. They outline steps you can take, starting today, that will boost the effectiveness of your transition plan.

*Alberta Modified COPS Outlook, 2005-2010. Alberta Human Resources and Employment (Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce, Alberta's 10 Year Strategy, 2006).

Your transition plan: making it work

WITHOUT A DOUBT, the single most important step you can take to make sure your transition plan works is to **get involved**. Take an active role in all stages of the plan. **After all, it is your plan and nobody knows you better than you!**

As you will find out in part two, you will have lots of help to create a transition plan. But there are some key components that you can take charge of **starting right now**, to ensure your plan is successful. You can:

- learn to advocate for yourself
- build your skills at school
- build your skills at home and in the community
- create a portfolio.

Learn to advocate for yourself

To advocate means to speak up in support of someone or something. When you do this, you are speaking up for yourself. Self-advocacy involves understanding and taking control of your own situation.

Self-advocacy is one of the most important skills you need to be successful in post-secondary settings. These institutions assume that you are an adult who is responsible for your own decisions, behaviour, success and failure. In a post-secondary setting, it is up to you to:

- find out what kinds of accommodations and supports you will need in all aspects of your program (including classrooms, labs and field placements)
- know how to ask and who to ask for these services and supports.

Becoming effective at self-advocacy starts with:

- knowing and understanding your disability
- knowing your strengths and challenges, both personal and academic
- being able to explain how you overcome the challenges of your disability in an academic setting (for example, what accommodations and strategies you use)
- understanding disclosure
- understanding your rights and responsibilities as a student with a disability.

If you have worked through part one to this point, you have already completed some activities that encourage you to look at your disability, your strengths and your challenges. If you have not completed these activities, try them now.

Disclosure

Disclosure means telling someone about your disability. This can be an issue if you have an invisible disability—one that others cannot easily "see." If you have an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) at school, then you or your parents have disclosed your disability within the school system.

If you have not disclosed, you will need to think about how to handle information about your disability now, while you are still in school and later, when you begin your post-secondary education. Whether or not you disclose is a decision only you and your family can make.

You may decide to disclose in order to:

- access the support you need and are entitled to (for example, accommodations or grants for students with disabilities)
- avoid misunderstandings with teachers, instructors and other students
- educate others and reduce the stigma around your disability
- reduce the risk of discrimination.

There are some risks involved with disclosure.

- Some people may not understand your disability and may have negative stereotypes about it.

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SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy is very different from demanding your rights. Effective self-advocates:

- **respect those they deal with**
- **maintain positive relationships**
- **work towards win-win solutions.**

AS YOU EXPLORE career options and occupations, you will notice that most of them require post-secondary training of some kind. It is estimated that 65 percent of new jobs in Alberta will require some form of post-secondary education in the 21st century.* High school is a stepping-stone to future learning, whether it is at a college or university, a technical school, or an apprenticeship program.

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* Alberta Workforce 2025 Overview, 2005-2015. Alberta Human Resources and Employment; Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce, Alberta's 10 Year Strategy, 2006.

Your transition plan: making it work

SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy is very different from demanding your rights. Effective self-advocates:

- respect those they deal with
- maintain positive relationships
- work towards win-win solutions.

Disclosure

continued

- Some people may discriminate on the basis of your disability.
- Some people do not respect confidences. They may share information you disclose to them with others, even if you ask them not to.

Disclose is not an "all or nothing" process. **Schools and post-secondary institutions only need to how your disability affects your role as a student**. With that information, they can help you develop a plan for accommodation and support.

Who should you disclose to?

If you are in school, you and your parents will meet with a teacher, counsellor or administrator and disclose to them. Through an assessment process, you, your parents and the school will decide the kind of support or accommodation you need. Disclosing while you are still in school lets you try out different kinds of supports and accommodations to figure out what works best for you—before you enter a post-secondary institution.

If you decide to disclose when you enroll in a post-secondary institution, it is a good idea to tell the institution's disability services office (DSO)—the earlier, the better. The Disability Service's Office's role is to work with instructors to support your disability-related needs. What you disclose to the DSO and what you may later disclose to instructors may vary. In all cases, you have the right to request that the person you disclose to keeps all of the information, or any part that you specify, confidential. Your request will be respected.

Provide the DSO with relevant documentation about your disability. Based on these documents, the DSO will work with you to develop a letter or memo that you can show your instructors, saying:

- that you are registered with the DSO
- how your disability affects you as a student
- that you require accommodations. The letter may describe the accommodations you need, how the DSO will provide them and how the instructor may support you by providing them.

The DSO may also encourage you to meet with your instructors to discuss your accommodation needs.

This section is adapted from the Canadian Mental Health Association publication *Your Education—Your Future*. For an in-depth discussion about disclosure, please refer to the publication, available at **www.cmha.ca/youreducation**. You will find more information about post-secondary disability services offices (DSOs) in part two.

Your rights and responsibilities

You have the right to...	You have the responsibility to...
access services and environments available to other students in the same course or program	develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students
be treated with respect	use respect and diplomacy when dealing with others
receive reasonable accommodations	self-disclose and provide documentation, in order to receive accommodations
change your accommodation needs	ask for what you need and make sure your needs are met
define your own success	ask for accommodations; develop, review and revise an accommodation plan
	learn how "the system" works

Tools for self-advocacy

Tool No.1

Be able to communicate your long- and short-term goals effectively to others.

When you have a clear and realistic vision of what you want and what your goals are, you will be able to share it with your parents and the people on your transition planning team. This will ensure that your transition plan reflects what you want.

The visioning and goal-setting activities earlier in this section will help you with this. Use your answers to fill in the blanks in the following script:

My long-term goal is.

To reach that goal, I will

Tool No.2

Be able to describe the impact of your disability.

Tool No.3

Be able to ask for accommodation.

When you talk to instructors about your disability, briefly and clearly describe how it affects your performance at school.

For example, *"I have a disability that makes it hard for me to pay attention for the entire class."*

What academic tasks are challenging because of your disability? What strategies, supports or accommodations help you with academic tasks? Go back to the "Know your challenges" activity earlier in this section and use your answers to fill in the blanks in the following script:

My disability affects my ability to (name the academic activity)

If I were able to (name the accommodation)

I think I would be able to complete the requirements for this course."

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Courses at the post-secondary level cover more material much faster and to much greater depth than high school courses do. Be aware that you may need accommodations and supports in a post-secondary setting that you have not needed to this point. (Some students find that a reduced course load is a useful accommodation.)

How to ask an instructor for accommodation

- Meet privately with the instructor at the beginning of the semester.
- Give the instructor the letter or memo from the Disability Service Office (DSO).
- Describe how your disability affects you as a student. Describe the accommodations and strategies you use, the accommodations the DSO provides and the additional accommodations that will help. Use your script!
- Ask the instructor to describe how the course will be conducted. (For example, will there be class or lab activities that will affect your participation?) Work with the instructor and the DSO to plan for accommodations you may not have anticipated.
- Request accommodations, discuss alternatives and come to a clear agreement.
- Thank the instructor.
- If you feel the instructor has not understood or agreed with your needs, talk with the DSO.

Adapted from Canadian Mental Health Association publication Your Education—Your Future, www.cmha.ca/youreducation, February 20, 2006.

Disclosure

- some people may assume you have a disability
- some people do not expect you to have a disability

Schools and post-secondary institutions only need to know your disability affects your role as a student. With your consent, they can help you to get the accommodations and supports you need.

Who should you disclose to?

You have the right to

access services and environments available to other students in the same course or program

receive reasonable accommodations

define your own success

You have the responsibility to

develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students

self-disclose and provide documentation, in order to receive accommodations

ask for accommodations, develop, review and revise an accommodation plan

Courses at the post-secondary level cover more material much faster and to much greater depth than high school courses do. Be aware that you may need accommodations and supports in a post-secondary setting that you have not needed to this point. (Some students find that a reduced course load is a useful accommodation.)

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- Describe how your disability affects you as a student. Describe the accommodations and strategies you use, the accommodations the DSO provides and the additional accommodations that will help. Use your script!
- Ask the instructor to describe how the course will be conducted. If, for example, will there be class or lab activities that will affect your participation? Work with the instructor and the DSO to plan for accommodations you may not have anticipated.
- Suggest accommodations, discuss alternatives and come to a clear agreement.
- Thank the instructor.
- If you feel the instructor has not understood or agreed with your needs, talk with the DSO.

Tools for self-advocacy
continued

Tool No.4

Practise!

Practise and revise your descriptions of your goals, the impact of your disability and the accommodations you need until you feel confident using these scripts. Try them out on your parents, friends, members of your transition team and teachers you feel comfortable with. Ask them for feedback.

Self-advocacy checklist

I understand and can explain clearly how my disability affects me as a student.

I know and can explain clearly the accommodations that enable me to succeed.

I know my rights and responsibilities as a student with a disability.

I am learning how "the post-secondary planning system" works — at school, at post-secondary institutions and in the community.

I take an active role in planning for my transition. I make decisions about my own future.

I ask for what I need. I am assertive — not passive or aggressive.

I work with others (my parents, members of my transition team, teachers, Disability Service Office staff, instructors) to create a win-win situation.

I plan ahead.

I know who to ask for support and advice. This allows me to maintain control of my situation.

I keep a record of important information to support my self-advocacy. (See part three for more details.)

Success stories

You have to be prepared to ask for what you need... instead of depending on someone else to do it for you.

How did Kim, Roman, Renée and James learn to advocate for themselves?

Kim learned to self-advocate from her parents—especially her mom. "She helped me to realize that authority figures don't always get it right, that they won't always know how it is for me." At one point in her post-secondary studies, Kim found herself advocating on behalf of her whole class before the administration. "You need these skills before you even get to university," she says. In a post-secondary setting, as Kim observes, "you have to check your parents at the door."

After unsuccessful attempts to fit into two different specialized Grade 10 environments, **Roman** convinced everyone involved to let him attend a "cyber school." Up to that point, his parents had advocated for him. At university, where everyone assumes you are a responsible adult learner, you have to be prepared to ask for what you need. "It's academic self-advocacy," says Roman. You need to ask specifically instead of depending on someone else to do it for you.

Build your skills

High school offers you many opportunities to build learning and personal management skills that will help you succeed — in school today and in post-secondary studies in the future. You can start working on these skills right now.

Be organized

Being organized saves time and helps you to stay on top of school work. Use this checklist to see how well organized you are:

- I ask my teachers for course outlines, so I can plan and work ahead.
- I ask my teachers for mark breakdowns and I use this information to decide on priorities and plan my work and study time.
- I get to work on long-term assignments right away. I start with the due dates and plan backwards, so I know how much time I have.
- When I do not understand something in class, I ask sooner, rather than later.
- I use an agenda or palm pilot or organizer to schedule school work, extra-curricular and volunteer activities and work and social time.
- If I am away, I find out what I missed.
- I organize for school the night before, so I know what I need and I have it with me.
- I keep track of the time it takes for me to do certain tasks. This helps me plan.
- I keep my supplies and learning materials, such as pens, pencils, calculators, textbooks, assignments and so on in the same place, so I know where they are.
- I use vacation time and weekends to do reading in advance.

In high school, you are used to receiving frequent feedback on how you are doing, in the form of quizzes, tests, assignments, classroom work and homework checks. At the post-secondary level, there are fewer exams and assignments and each of them covers much more material. You may not receive feedback on how you are doing until mid-term. For this reason, your ability to process what you are learning—your learning and study skills—must be fined-tuned if you want to succeed in a post-secondary setting.

After a year abroad between high school and college, **Renée** realized that she didn't have to be ashamed of her dyslexia. "Now, each semester I talk to professors and students about my disability. It's good to explain things and ask for what you need. It also helps people learn about your disability."

James had to advocate in order to be accepted into the woodworking course at NAIT. First, he had to convince the program head, who "nearly fell out of his chair" when he heard James' request but was won over after observing James in his own workshop. Next, James had to sway the reluctant instructor. After watching James use a table saw, the instructor said she couldn't turn him down.

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It's good to explain things... it helps people learn about your disability.

Assistive technology lets you perform tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. It helps reduce the barriers to learning caused by physical, sensory, cognitive, speech or learning disabilities. Computers are a well-known kind of assistive technology. The Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto has an online resource that describes and compares a number of available technologies. Visit it at **www.utoronto.ca/atrc/reference/tech/techgloss.html**

Know how to use computers/ assistive technology

Computer skills are a "must-have" in both post-secondary settings and the workplace. High school is a good place to develop your computer skills, if you do not already have them. Make sure you know how to use:

- the keyboard, mouse or voice-recognition software
- word processing software for writing assignments
- e-mail
- the Internet for research.

If your disability makes it difficult for you to use a computer, now is the time to talk with your Individual Program Planning team, teacher or counsellor to arrange a complete assistive technology assessment. Make sure the assistive technology specialist shows you how to:

- access all the features on the system you use now
- download features from the Internet for free.

The more opportunity you have now to become familiar with assistive technology, the more prepared you will be to move to a post-secondary setting.

Build your skills in the community

As you move out into the world of adulthood, you will need other skills, too — skills that will help you become independent, the kind of skills you learn and develop through experiences in the community. Volunteering, work experience through school and part-time work will help you build these skills.

Most of the section "Build Your Skills at School" is based on material adapted from the Canadian Mental Health Association publication Your Education—Your Future (**www.cmha.ca/youreducation**, February 20, 2006) and from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series (Alberta Advanced Education, 2004).

To order *Make School Work for You: A Resource for Junior and Senior High Students Who Want to Be More Successful Learners* (2001), visit the Learning Resources website at **www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca**

How did Kim, Roman, Renée and James develop their skills through experiences in the community?

It's important to find an area that you're good at, outside of school. You can really grow from those experiences.

"Horse-back riding was the one thing I was successful at," explains **Kim**. Riding competitively helped her develop her confidence and her adaptability. "In competition I learned that what happens, happens. You have to deal with it and move on." Kim says that now nothing makes her nervous—even speaking about learning disabilities in front of large groups of people, something she does regularly. Kim developed organizational and other skills by fund-raising for the homeless and setting up blood donor clinics at her high school.

During high school, **Roman** began volunteering at a hospital in order to branch out and overcome his discomfort in dealing with people. "I've learned the art of small talk," he says, a useful skill in work situations. Roman notes, "Volunteering is like work, only on your own terms." Roman continues to volunteer at a campus radio station, the Red Cross, and as the editor of an autism newsletter. Volunteering has helped him develop his social, organizational and administrative skills.

Creating a portfolio

A PORTFOLIO IS A COLLECTION of documents and photographs that you keep either as hard copies in a presentation binder or artist's portfolio, or as digital information on computer or CD.

Your portfolio is a key part of your successful transition from high school to post-secondary. It is the portable, self-contained record of your experiences and accomplishments in school and in the community. It also describes your personal strengths and interests.

Keeping your portfolio up-to-date keeps it effective — it grows and changes as you do. Review your portfolio every semester. Beyond high school and post-secondary, you can revise your portfolio to create a useful work search tool.

You can use your portfolio **now**:

- as information for your current Individualized Program Planning team
- as information for your transition planning team
- to keep track of skill development
- to keep track of assessments
- to keep track of accommodations
- to introduce yourself to service providers
- to help you obtain volunteer positions or paid work.

You can use your portfolio **later** to:

- help with registration at a post-secondary institution
- introduce yourself to the Disability Service Office at a post-secondary institution
- help you approach instructors about accommodations.

Use the checklist on the next page to create your portfolio. Ask your parents to help you fill in any gaps with copies from the records they have been keeping.

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POWERFUL PORTFOLIO PIECES

The Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, means getting a head start in building a portfolio. Beginning in Grade 10, students can start learning a trade...gaining real work experience and getting paid!

In addition to a wage, RAP apprentices may earn credits toward their high school diploma and begin acquiring the hours of on-the-job training required to become a certified journeyperson.

For more information visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Renée played sports in high school and was the captain of a synchronized skating team. "These experiences showed me that I had qualities and abilities that weren't represented by my grades," she says. "It's important to find an area that you're good at, outside of school. You can really grow from those experiences."

James was involved in wrestling, downhill and water skiing and was a score-keeper/time-keeper for his high school basketball team. He started woodworking at age nine, learning from a mentor who was also blind. At 13 he began working in a family friend's cabinet-making business. "At first, the other workers were terrified for me," James explains. "But eventually, they began to coach me." These experiences taught James how to determine his limits and work within them.

continued next page

Create a portfolio continued

My portfolio contains

- a copy of my latest report card
- my high school transcripts (Grade 12)
- any recent standard test scores
- my script for describing my disability and its affect on me as a student
- information about accommodations I use
- my current transition plan
- photos or photocopies of any awards or prizes, both school- and community-related
- up-to-date assessments
- assignments and test results I am proud of
- my résumé
- letters of recommendation from teachers, counsellors, service providers and others in the community
- information about my volunteer activities
- information about my work experience activities
- information about my part-time and summer jobs
- information about my goals, learning and career plans
- correspondence from Disability Service Offices at post-secondary institutions

Are you ready?

AS YOU HAVE SEEN, there are many details to think about when you are planning the transition from high school to a post-secondary program! Use the three following checklists to help you keep track of what to do when. This guide refers to (and often covers in detail) the items on these lists. If you have not read about them in part one, keep reading! They will be covered in parts two and three.

Moving from junior to senior high

Even if you are already in high school, check to see that you have looked after all the following details:

- I have started to identify my learning preferences and strategies.
- I am learning to describe how my disability affects me as a student and the accommodations that help.
- I have begun to explore my dreams, interests and skills.
- I use career explorations to learn about occupations I might be interested in.
- I am developing my academic, time management and organization skills at school.
- I am developing other employability skills at school and in the community.
- I keep track of my academic goals and choose courses to help me achieve them.
- I have started creating a portfolio.
- I am exploring ways to be actively involved in the community through volunteering, extra-curricular activities and other experiences.
- I am learning, practising and using decision making skills.
- I am taking part on my Individualized Program Planning team.
- I have applied for a Social Insurance Number.
- I am beginning to take more responsibility for managing issues related to my disability.
- I am beginning to learn skills for independent living.

First and second years of high school

Go through this check list in both Grades 10 and 11.

- I have identified my learning preferences and the strategies that work for me.
- I can describe how my disability affects me as a student and the accommodations I need.
- I am researching other assistive technology tools and all the accessibility features on the computer I use to increase my opportunities (if this applies to me).
- I am keeping track of changes in my goals, interests and skills.
- I am actively researching occupations I might be interested in.
- I have started researching post-secondary programs.
- I have started researching ways to pay for my post-secondary education.
- I am building my academic, time management and organization skills at school.
- I am building other employability skills at school and in the community.
- I know my academic goals and I am choosing courses to help me achieve them.
- I am actively involved in the community through volunteering, work experience, extra-curricular activities, part-time work or other experiences.
- I update my portfolio regularly.
- I update my résumé regularly.
- I am learning and practising decision making skills.
- I play an active role on my Individualized Program Planning team.
- I play an active role on my transition planning team.
- I am researching and connecting with service providers and support groups in the community.
- I have invited service providers to visit or join my transition team.
- I am practising my self-advocacy skills.
- I have a Social Insurance Number.
- I am taking more responsibility for managing issues related to my disability.
- I am learning and practising skills for independent living.

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What the challenges did Kim, Roman, Renée and James face when they began their post-secondary programs?

Kim has a print processing disability. Throughout school, her parents read all printed material aloud for her. Until she got a scanner and a screen-reading program at university, she had to rely on volunteer readers. Just covering the material was a challenge. For her first grad school course, Kim spent up to 20 hours a week just reading. "Most people read faster than I can, because I have to listen to read—at the speed that someone talks." But the biggest challenge was learning how to get her thoughts onto paper. "I had to learn how to organize my thoughts before I could write," she says. In the beginning, Kim needed a lot of support. Fortunately, she found it through the U of A's program for students with learning disabilities. Kim uses voice recognition software for her written work.

Roman finds that university demands more and better critical thinking, analytical and study skills. With distance education, the challenge is to discipline yourself to do the work—or as Roman puts it, "to keep slaying the dragon of procrastination."

continued next page

You have to be calm and polite, but if you don't speak up, you do risk getting walked on.

Are you ready? continued

Your final year of high school

It is a good idea to go through this checklist both at the beginning, and at the half-way point, of your final high school year

- I have identified my learning preferences and the strategies that work for me.
- I can describe how my disability affects me as a student and the accommodations I need.
- I am researching other assistive technology tools that might increase my opportunities (if this applies to me).
- I am keeping track of changes in my goals, interests and skills.
- I have contacted the post-secondary programs in which I am most interested.
- I have gathered all the information I need about the schools' disability services, registration procedures and timelines, assessment and accommodation requirements.
- I have visited/taken part in an open house at the schools I am interested in.
- I am ready to apply/I have applied to the program(s).
- I have identified funding sources for my post-secondary education.
- I understand and have met/will meet the assessment and other requirements.
- I am ready to apply/I have applied for funding.
- I continue to research occupations I am interested in.
- My academic, time management and organization skills are strong.
- I use my other skills at school and in the community.
- I am taking/have taken and passed all the prerequisite courses I need for the post-secondary programs I am applying for.
- I am involved in my community through volunteering, work experience, extra-curricular activities, part-time work or other experiences.
- I update my portfolio regularly.
- I update my résumé regularly.
- I use my decision making skills regularly.
- I take an active role on my Individualized Program Planning team.
- I take an active role on my transition planning team.
- I connect with agencies and support groups in the community.
- I regularly use my self-advocacy skills.
- I take responsibility for managing issues related to my disability.
- I use my skills for independent living daily.

What the challenges did Kim, Roman, Renée and James face when they began their post-secondary programs?

Continued

If I were doing it over again, I would begin the assessment process much earlier!

For **Renée**, the biggest challenge was trying to make it through the first semester without accommodations, while waiting for her assessment results. After receiving her results, she was able to work with a strategist who taught her how to study, write essays, prepare for class and manage her time, based on her individual needs. "If I were doing it over again," says Renée, "I would begin the assessment process much earlier!"

"I read Braille," says James, "but starting in high school, the volume of material began to be too much to handle that way." James uses a program that translates text on the computer screen into spoken word. Since it has to be scanned before he gets it, reading material for his courses is sometimes late, which means he may need extra time to complete his work. "Professors are usually flexible," he explains. "You have to be calm and polite, but if you don't speak up, you do risk getting walked on."

The bottom line

When you have thought about and found out about the following "bottom line" items, you will be ready to move on to post-secondary studies!

- I am prepared for the **many differences** between high school and the post-secondary setting.
- I have found out about the **academic policies** at the institution I am enrolled in. **I have read the institution's calendar**.
- I am prepared for larger class sizes and a much larger institution.
- I know what services, disability and otherwise, are available on campus.
- I am prepared for a fast academic pace and independent learning.
- I know how to monitor my own academic performance. I know that no one else will do this for me.
- I have developed time management, organizational and learning strategies.
- I understand my disability and can explain how it affects me as a student.
- I can advocate for myself.
- I have requested accommodations and supports **EARLY**. I have provided all the appropriate documentation to the Disability Service Office.
- I have planned my course load carefully.
- I have considered taking a reduced course load. I know that grades are more important than finishing a program within a certain timeframe.

a wise choice is an informed choice, when you know yourself and the world.

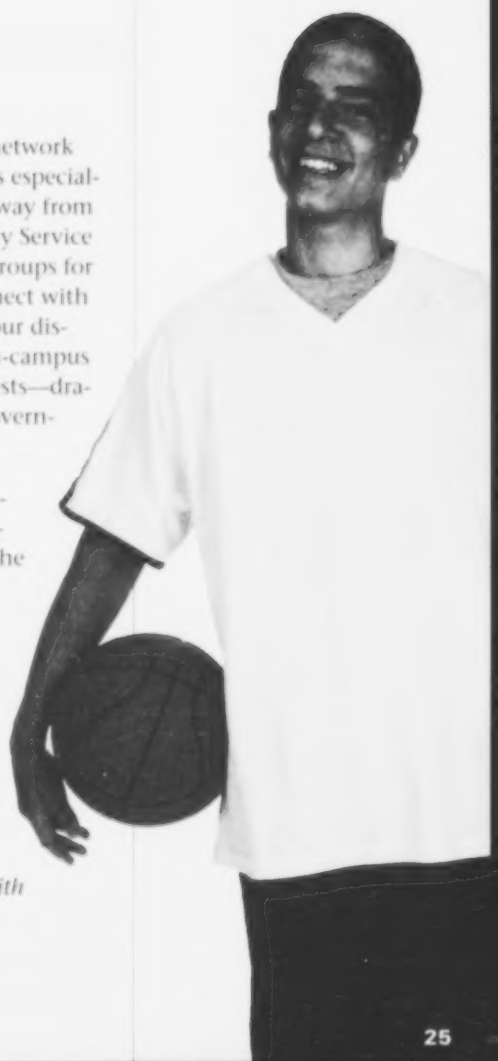
Dr. Helen Farmer

When you get there

AT SOME POINT IN YOUR FUTURE, you will have completed this journey. You will have made the transition from high school to post-secondary. You will be there! And when you get there, you will be starting on another journey in a very different environment. Here are some things to think about before you set out on that journey:

- Take part in orientation activities, especially those designed for students with disabilities.
- Plan and practise the route to all your classes before your first day.
- As soon as possible, introduce yourself to your instructors.
- In a post-secondary setting you spend less time in class than you do at high school and more time working on your own. Make sure you are motivated and organized!
- In a post-secondary setting you receive feedback less frequently than you do in high school. You will need to be able to recognize when you have a problem and know who and how to ask for help.
- Build and maintain a support network both on and off campus. This is especially important if you are living away from home. Check with the Disability Service Office for on-campus support groups for students with disabilities. Connect with the local advocacy group for your disability. Find out about other on-campus groups that support your interests—drama, music, sports or student government, for example.

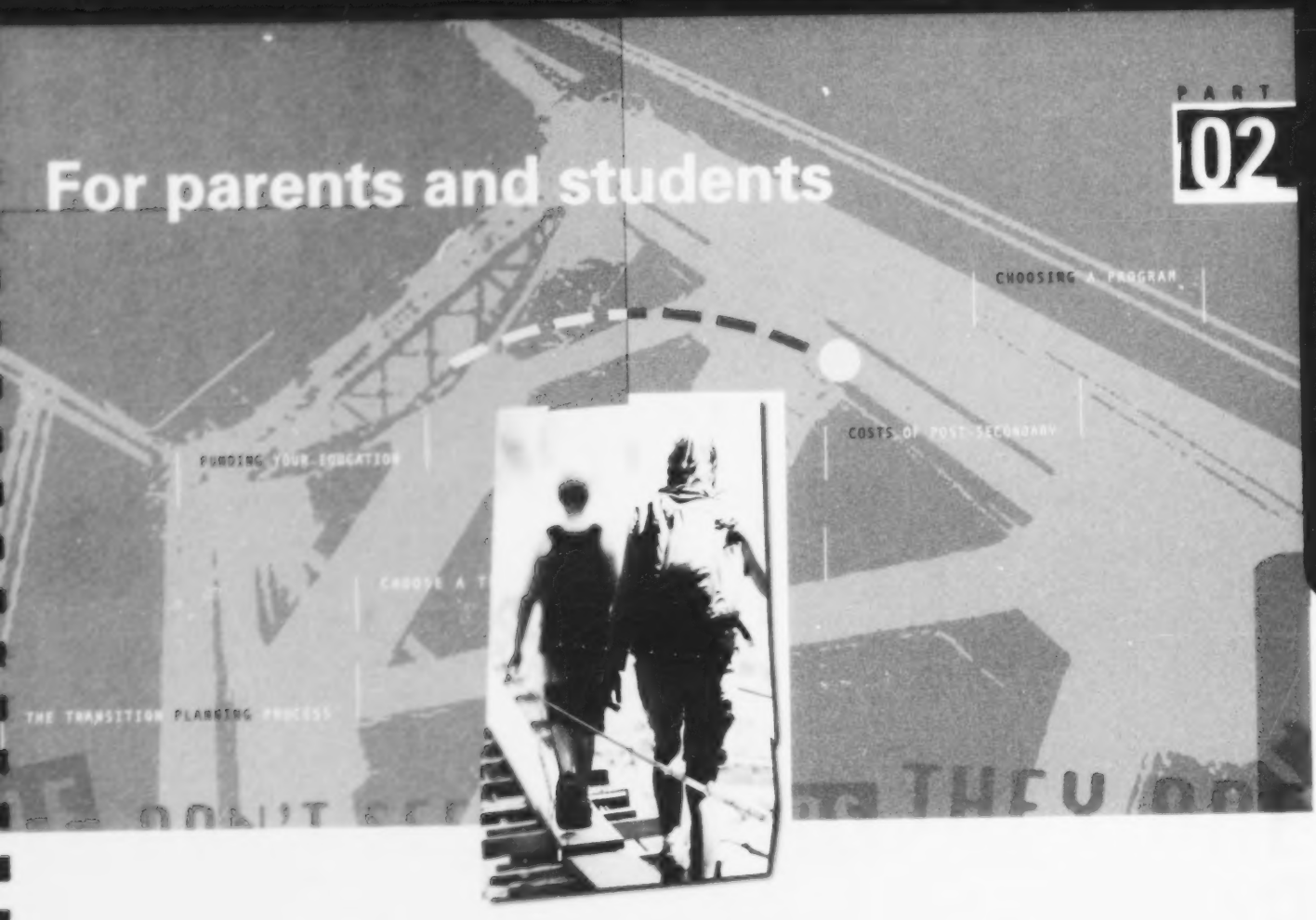
For more information and suggestions about thriving in a post-secondary environment, check out the Canadian Mental Health Association publication *Your Education—Your Future* (**www.cmha.ca/youreducation**). For disability service office contacts and specific information for Alberta post-secondary educational institutions, check out the Alberta Committee for Citizens with Disabilities publication *Resource guide for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities* (**www.accd.net**).



Notes

For parents and students

PART 02



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The man who
removes a mountain
begins by carrying
away small stones.

Chinese Proverb

About the transition planning process

THOUGHTFUL PLANNING can help you deal effectively with any challenges you might have with the transition to post-secondary education as a result of your disability. Thoughtful, effective transition planning is:

- student-centred and focuses on your hopes, dreams and goals
- time-conscious and organized, starting early and following a series of steps
- a collaboration, involving both you and your parents, teachers, service providers and others, working as a team
- comprehensive, focusing not only on academic skills but also on other skills you need to succeed.

Student-centred

An effective transition plan reflects and takes seriously your hopes, dreams and goals and your family's vision for your future. It recognizes your learning successes and challenges, as well as the strategies and accommodations you use to reach your goals.

You are the key player on a student-centred transition planning team. Self-awareness, self-advocacy and problem solving are important parts of your role.

Time-conscious and organized

Transition planning is a process that takes time. Your transition to post-secondary studies may start as early as junior high school. It is never too late to begin the process. But if you start later than the first or second year of high school, you may have fewer options and more challenges. The sooner you start, the more time you have to put your plans into action and to become familiar with post-secondary institutions and their requirements and services.

If you have an IPP (Individualized Program Plan) at school, it should include transition planning. You will probably have worked with your IPP team on transitions from junior to senior high school and from grade to grade. You may want to include IPP team members on your transition planning team. However, it is important to recognize that the transition from high school to post-secondary takes you beyond the school system. For this reason, it can be a good strategy to think of your transition planning team as distinct from your IPP team.

continued next page

Research has consistently shown that student involvement in the planning process helps students develop a better understanding of their own learning needs and provides opportunities for them to develop much-needed self-advocacy and problem solving skills.

An overview of the transition planning process

- Near the end of junior high school, you and your parents identify a goal for after high school—post-secondary studies. This goal gives direction and focus to the next three years of your schooling (high school).
- With this long-term goal in mind, you, your parents and the people on your transition team put together a three- or four-year plan for high school that will help you reach your goal.
- This is the formalized, student-centred plan developed by your transition planning team to reflect your skills, interests, challenges and career explorations.
- This plan includes short- and long-term goals but it is also flexible, because your interests may change rapidly as you continue to explore your options and develop new interests.
- The plan should be reviewed regularly by the entire team and should be open for changes to everything from individual courses to goals to the time frame.

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Alberta Education, Looking to the Future, 2006.

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An overview

Adapted with permission from *A Family Affair: Preparing Parents and Students with Learning Disabilities for Post-secondary Education*. Jane Drover, Lynne Owen & Alexander Wilson. The Meighen Centre at Mount Allison University in partnership with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1998.

While the role of professionals is important, the transition planning process will be far more effective if a student and his or her parents are actively involved in setting goals and objectives and making decisions about how to achieve them... Remember that over the long term, family ties and personal friendships will outlive professional duty. Professionals, even those who are truly committed to your child, will come and go.

New Brunswick Association for Community Living, Building Bridges: A Parent guide on Transition from School to Work, Adult Life and Community Participation for Youth with Disabilities, 2002.

About the transition planning process
continued

Your transition planning team will have additional members, an expanded focus and different goals.

Transition planning must deal with constant change and with deadlines. For this reason, the process needs to be formalized, with scheduled meetings, assigned roles, regular reporting and record-keeping.

A collaboration

Successful transitions are based on the shared responsibility of a team of people, including you and your parents, teachers, service providers, post-secondary disabilities services staff, mentors, extended family and community members. Your transition team should offer you a strong circle of support and a wide range of knowledge and experience to draw on.

Comprehensive

Part one of the guide encourages you to develop a variety of skills to help you meet the challenges of transition. Your transition plan should address these skills, as well as your academic skills. To succeed in a post-secondary setting, you will need to:

- monitor your own performance
- problem solve in new situations
- interact appropriately with peers and adults
- understand and explain your learning strengths and challenges as well as the strategies and accommodations you use.

The five steps of the transition planning process

Step one: Get ready

Start the transition planning process early!

- Take advantage of opportunities to explore accommodations, strategies and assistive technology while you still have access to the support available within the high school system.
- Ensure that you are choosing the high school courses required by post-secondary programs you are interested in, even if it takes you longer to complete the requirements.
- Think now about the steps you will take after high school. This gives you time to develop the skills you need to succeed.

The first step in the transition planning process involves gathering the information you need before your first meeting with the transition planning team. **Most of this information is about you.**

The activity on the next page will help you create a profile of yourself to present to your transition planning team. If you have not completed the activities in part one, try them now. They will help you with this activity. You may want to complete a new profile every six months or so, as your plans and interests change.

My profile	My thoughts
My strengths	
My challenges	
How I like to learn	
Accommodations and strategies I use	
My skills	
My interests	
My accomplishments	
Community activities I am involved in	
What I see myself doing after high school	
My concerns about my future	
Why I am excited about my future	
Career areas/occupations I am interested in	
What interests me about them/ Why I think they "fit"	
My current learning goals	
My long-term goal(s)	
My short-term goals	
Other...	

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The five steps of the transition planning process

My thoughts

My challenges

Accommodations and strategies I use

My interests

Community activities I am involved in

My concerns about my future

Career areas/occupations I am interested in

My current learning goals

My short-term goals

Step one: Get ready
continued

Parents, the following table will help you share your thoughts about your teen's transition from high school with the transition planning team.

Parent profile	My thoughts
My teen's strengths	
My teen's challenges	
How my teen likes to learn	
Accommodations and strategies my teen uses	
My teen's skills	
My teen's interests	
My teen's accomplishments	
Community activities my teen is involved in	
What I see my teen doing after high school	
My concerns about my teen's future	
Why I am excited about my teen's future	
Career areas/occupations my teen is interested in	
Support I can offer my teen through transition	
Steps I am taking to help my teen prepare for adult life	
Other...	

Step two: Choose a transition planning team

This is *your* transition but inviting others to be on your planning team makes sense for a number of reasons:

- The team brings together people from all aspects of your life: school, community, service providers, post-secondary institutions, friends and family. All of your needs and interests are represented.
- Communication is easier—each agency and individual stays current with what the others are doing. This cuts down on paperwork and avoids duplication.
- Your team members connect you, through their networks, to a greater range of resources.
- Teams can be great at problem solving!

If you already have an Individualized Program Planning (IPP) team at school, those team members could become the core of your transition planning team. Remember, however, that most of them are probably working within the school system. You will need to invite additional members from other agencies and services.

If you do not have an Individualized Program Planning team and you have not disclosed your disability within the high school setting, you and your parents will need to decide if disclosure would be to your benefit. (See the discussion about disclosure in part one of this guide.) If you do not have an IPP team or if you want to keep your transition planning separate from your IPP, you and your parents may need to organize a transition planning team.

Who should be on the team?

Your transition team will likely include the following key members:

- **You**—As the person in transition, you are at the centre of the process.
- **Your parents**—They know a lot about you and can support you through this transition and beyond.
- **School personnel**—These could be classroom teachers, resource persons, guidance counsellors or administrators. They are your link to the school system and the supports it offers. They can give you useful feedback on your school performance.
- **Current and future service or health care providers**—They are your link to resources beyond the school system.
- **Staff from the Disability Services Office (DSO), also known as the Office for Students with Disabilities**, of the post-secondary institution(s) you are interested in—They are your link to admission and accommodations requirements and on-campus services. You can invite them to join your team in your last year of high school.
- **Community members**—Employers, volunteer coordinators, mentors, friends—They provide perspective and support.
- **Other family members**—Like your parents, they know you well and can support you through this transition and beyond.

Choose a core team of about five to ten members. More members may create scheduling problems and may feel overwhelming to you and your family. You can add new members or invite guests as you need their input. As you get closer to finishing high school, the involvement of school personnel will become less significant.

Team member roles

Your role includes:

- participating fully in the transition planning process
- maintaining good relationships with the people on your transition team
- sharing your dreams and goals with the team and updating them about any changes
- taking an active part in planning, decision-making, setting goals and so on
- providing and regularly updating information about your learning experiences, skills, interests, challenges and activities

continued next page

LIMIT PARTICIPATION

Limit the participation of professionals who do not really know your child or you. Professionals—teachers, social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, etc.—may tend to dominate the process if too many are involved. You and your child may be intimidated and your involvement may be limited.

New Brunswick Association for Community Living, Building Bridges: A Parent guide on Transition from School to Work, Adult Life and Community Participation for Youth with Disabilities, 2002.

Step one: Get ready

My thoughts

My teen's strengths

My teen's challenges

How my teen likes to learn

Accommodations and strategies my teen uses

My teen's skills

My teen's interests

Community activities my teen is involved in

My concerns about my teen's future

Career areas/occupations my teen is interested in

Steps I am taking to help my teen prepare for adult life

Limit the participation of professionals who do not really know your child or you. Professionals—teachers, social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, etc.—may tend to dominate the process if too many are involved. You and your child may be intimidated and your involvement may be limited.

- You are the focus of the meetings.
- You have the first opportunity to address each topic.
- The team talks with, not about, you.

GROUND RULES

- **You are the focus of the meetings.**
- **You have the first opportunity to address each topic.**
- **The team talks with, not about, you.**

Adapted from the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, *School to Life Transition Handbook: Five Steps to Successful Planning*. 1999.

Step two: Choose a transition planning team
continued

- relying on team members as a resource for information, advice, contacts, strategies and so on and providing them with feedback on their suggestions
- monitoring the effectiveness of the plan
- questioning any decisions that you do not think will serve your dreams and goals and using your self-advocacy skills to work with the team towards a better solution.

Parents, your role includes:

- participating fully in the transition planning process
- maintaining good relationships with the people on the transition team
- sharing your hopes for your teen
- taking an active part in planning, decision-making, setting goals and so on
- providing information about your teen's interests, strengths and challenges
- giving your informed consent to any assessments or services required
- being fully informed of the school's programs
- following up regularly with transition team members to ensure plans are being implemented and taking specific action as necessary
- monitoring the effectiveness of the plan
- questioning any decisions that you do not think will serve your teen's best interests and using your advocacy skills to work with the team towards a better solution.

The transition coordinator

If your transition planning is part of your IPP, this role will probably be taken by school personnel. If you are developing your transition plan outside of the school, your parent or another team member will take this role.

The transition coordinator:

- serves as the contact person
- organizes and runs meetings
- keeps track of decisions and tasks
- coordinates communication and paperwork—assessments, progress reports and so on
- monitors the completion of tasks
- monitors the effectiveness of the plan.

Other team members

- attend meetings
- contribute ideas, information, support and resources
- carry out tasks and report on outcomes
- monitor the effectiveness of the plan.

As you prepare to choose your team members, ask the following questions:

Who do I know well and trust?

Who do I go to for support and advice?

Who knows me best?

Who supports my dreams and goals?

In what ways can these people help me?

Step three: Develop a plan

Your transition plan should be based on two key elements:

- your career explorations (which are based on your dreams, interests and skills)
- your goal of attending a post-secondary program.

Over a period of months or years, you and your team will identify an on-going series of short-term goals that will help you achieve your long-term goal of a post-secondary education. These short-term goals will depend on your interests, the program(s) you are considering, your disability and how much time is left before you finish high school.

Your transition plan is the actions you and your team take to achieve these short-term goals (including how to overcome any obstacles along the way) leading to your long-term goal.

Your transition plan will look at short-term goals and related issues or problems in the following areas:

- accommodations, including assistive technology, that you need now and later
- assessment and coding within the school system, if necessary
- academic prerequisites for programs you are interested in
- assessment required for accommodations in the post-secondary program(s) you are interested in
- funding for tuition costs and accommodations
- living arrangements while you attend a post-secondary program, if applicable
- your support network both on- and off-campus
- guardianship and trusteeship provisions at age 18, if necessary

Before the meeting

Before the first meeting of your transition team, check with the transition coordinator that the following items are included on the agenda:

introductions, beginning with you and your parents

discussion of ground rules

discussion and agreement on how decisions will be made (by you and your parents, by consensus or by vote)

the opportunity for you to present your dreams and goals

the opportunity for your parents to present their hopes for you.

During the meeting

The team will work through issues and towards goals together by:

identifying the issue to be dealt with, problem to be solved or goal to be achieved

clarifying the situation, if necessary

identifying problems that could get in the way

brainstorming and problem solving to suggest options for action

asking you and your parents for your response to options

choosing the best option(s)

writing down a summary of the decision, the chosen option(s), what actions will be taken, who will take them and a timeline.

continued next page

Step three: Develop a plan
continued

Use the following chart to keep track of developments in your transition plan:

Keeping track

Date/place of meeting:

Team members present:

Goals/ problems identified	
Option(s) chosen	
Action to be taken	
Who will take action	
When it will be done	
How we will know that the goal is achieved/ problem is solved	

Next meeting time and place:

Step four: Monitor the plan

Your team should continue to meet regularly (every six months or after every reporting period, for example) throughout Grades 9 and 10. Beginning sometime in Grade 11 and throughout Grade 12, the team will need to meet more frequently to make sure all goals and deadlines are met.

Transition planning is an on-going process. All team members, but especially you and your parents, will want to keep re-visiting your goals and plans. You need to make sure they continue to reflect your needs and wishes effectively.

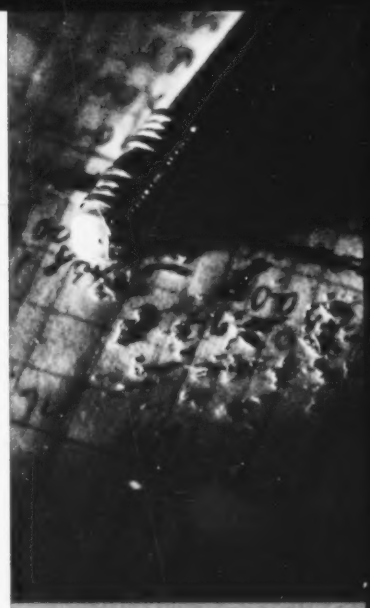
Monitoring the plan

Ask the following questions to decide if your plan is working:

Yes	No	Questions to ask
		Is my plan based on my goals, strengths and challenges?
		Does the plan address my parents' hopes and concerns?
		Does my team meet regularly and often enough?
		Do I feel like I am part of the team?
		Is my team documenting all goals, decisions and tasks?
		Are team members completing the tasks they take on?
		Has my assessment been updated as necessary?
		Does the plan look at my accommodations and strategies?
		Are these being updated as necessary?
		Does the plan help me explore current assistive technology?
		Does the plan look at my academic goals and are they helping me achieve them?
		Does the plan help me achieve a good match between high school courses and post-secondary courses I am interested in?
		Am I achieving my academic goals?

Yes	No	Questions to ask
		Does the plan help me balance my course load so I can succeed?
		Does the plan help me explore post-secondary programs?
		Does the plan consider the documentation I need to apply to the post-secondary programs I am interested in (Grade 11 or 12)?
		Does the plan schedule a learning assessment (if I need one) within six months of the start of my post-secondary studies?
		Does the plan look at funding for my post-secondary program, especially to support my accommodation/assistive technology needs?
		Does the plan help me build or maintain a support network at school?
		Does the plan help me build or maintain a support network in the community?
		Does the plan help me connect with service providers in the community?
		Does the plan look at guardianship and trusteeship arrangements, if these are needed?

If these questions raise any concerns, and particularly if you answered "no" to any of them, talk to your transition coordinator. Ask for a special meeting to deal with your concerns.



You can boost the effectiveness of your transition plan! Find out how in "What Can You Do to Make Sure Your Transition Plan Works?" in part one.

Step five: Hold an exit meeting

At an exit meeting in the months before you finish high school, your transition team can ensure that all the goals of your plan have been achieved. Holding the meeting well in advance of graduation will allow time for follow-up, if necessary.

Transition checklist

Use the following checklist to make sure you are ready for transition:

I have

- an updated copy of my most recent assessment(s)
- a copy of my most recent Individualized Program Plan, including records of accommodations and assistive technology
- arranged for further assessments, if necessary
- copies of transcripts
- updated medical information, if applicable
- visited, in person or via the Internet, campuses of the post-secondary institutions I am interested in
- contacted/visited the Disability Service Offices at the post-secondary institutions I am interested in
- checked the accommodation policies and requirements at the post-secondary institutions I am interested in
- applied to the programs I am interested in
- researched funding sources
- applied for funding
- updated my portfolio
- successfully completed, or I am currently succeeding in, prerequisite high school courses

If this checklist raises any concerns, talk with your transition coordinator about a plan of action to complete any unfinished tasks or replace any missing documentation.

A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of opportunities; an optimist is one who makes opportunities of difficulties.

Reginald B. Mansell

"Listen to your advisors."

"Balance what they tell you against what you know about yourself."

- James Stainton

Funding post-secondary education

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE on your journey towards your goals, now is a good time to start thinking about how you and your family will finance your post-secondary education. As with all aspects of transition planning, the earlier you start, the more flexibility you will have.

What will post-secondary education cost?

Your post-secondary education costs will involve:

- tuition—$3,000 to $5,000 depending on the institution, the program and whether you attend full- or part-time.
- books—in the range of $100 per course and higher
- regular supplies—notebooks, paper, computer and so on
- special supplies and equipment, depending on the course
- transportation costs—getting to campus (unless you enroll in a distance or online program)
- living expenses, if you are living away from home.

You may also have additional costs, depending on your disability:

- You may have to pay for part or all of the accommodations or assistive technology you require.
- You may require extended time to successfully complete a program; for example, a two-year college program in three years or a four-year university program in six years.
- Depending on the effects of your disability (for example, the need to study aloud or a different sleeping pattern) you may require more expensive living arrangements, such as a single room or your own apartment.

The Government of Canada's CanLearn interactive website at **www.canlearn.ca** includes a budget calculator that lets you estimate future education costs and a budget estimator to help you plan a budget.

Aerodynamically the bumble bee shouldn't be able to fly but the bumble bee doesn't know it, and so it goes on flying anyway.

Mary Kay Ash

My budget estimate

Use the following activity to begin estimating the amount of funding you will need.

	Cost per year
Tuition:	$
Books:	$
Regular supplies:	$
Special supplies:	$
Accommodations and/or assistive technology: (Funding may be available for these costs.)	$
Transportation:	$
Living expenses:	$
Other:	$
Total cost per year:	**$**

Total cost per year $ _____ X ____ years of study = $ _____

Funding sources for students with disabilities

As a student with a disability, you can apply for and be considered for the same types of post-secondary funding available to all students. In addition, you may be eligible to receive the funding described in this section.

Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities

You may be eligible for this grant if you:

- are a full- or part-time student
- cannot meet education and living costs.

This grant of up to $2,000 per loan year is intended to help with the cost of tuition, books and other education-related expenses.

Canada Study Grant for the Accommodation of Students with Permanent Disabilities

You may be eligible for this grant if you:

- are a full- or part-time student
- have exceptional education-related costs due to your disability.

This grant of up to $8,000 per loan year is intended to help you pay for education-related equipment such as braillers, voice recognition software, laptop computers and services such as disability assessments, oral or sign interpreters and tutors.

Alberta Grant for Disabled Students

You may be eligible for this grant if you:

- are a full-time student
- are not eligible for the federal grants described above
- have costs not covered by the federal grants.

The maximum amount covered by this grant is $2,000 per loan year.

Canada Access Grant for Students from Low Income Families

This grant is available to students from low income families attending the first year of a full-time program that is at least two years in length. The grant covers up to 50 per cent of tuition to a maximum of $3,000.

Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)

If your disability related costs are over $8,000 or if you are not eligible for a student loan, you may be able to receive assistance for disability-related costs of services such as tutors, sign language interpreters and academic strategists and/or technologies such as voice-recognition software, scanners and readers. For more information, contact an Employment, Immigration and Industry consultant (see Resources for more information) or the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution you plan to attend.

Grant funding is also available for a skills training program through Alberta Works. Check with your local Employment, Immigration and Industry office to find out more about skills training opportunities in your area.

How to apply for post-secondary funding

There are five key components to applying for funding:

- **Start early!**
- **Meet with disability services staff at the post-secondary institution you are interested in.**
- **Apply for student funding.**
- **Complete Schedule 4 of the student funding application.**
- **Submit a complete student funding application, including documentation.**

Start early

As with all phases of transition planning, the earlier you begin the funding application process, the better. You should meet with the Disability Services Office (DSO) at the post-secondary institution early in your Grade 12 term. (Grade 11 is not too soon.)

- Assessments you may need for your funding application and accommodation request can take four months (or more) to arrange and complete.
- To allow enough processing time, you must submit your funding application by May 31 for a program that begins in September.

Meet with the Disability Service Office (DSO)

Meeting with the DSO is a vital step in applying both for your program and for your accommodation funding. They can guide you through both processes. When you meet with them, bring with you:

- documentation about your disability
- documentation for any accommodation, supports or strategies you are using in high school
- your most recent assessment.

The DSO can help you arrange for any assessment you might need (for example, if yours is out of date). The assessment will probably be completed by a third party. When the DSO has reviewed your assessment, they work with you to develop a **service plan**, also known as an accommodation plan or education plan.

Apply for student funding

In order to receive the Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities, Canada Study Grant for the Accommodation of Students with Permanent Disabilities or Alberta Grant for Disabled Students **you must apply for and be found eligible for a student loan**.

You can apply on paper. Application packages are available at:

- the Disability Service Office (Your best option, as they are very familiar with the process.)
- your high school
- Alberta Service Centres or Canada-Alberta Service Centres.

You can apply online. (You cannot apply online using a Macintosh computer.) Visit **www.alis.gov.ca** and click on Students Finance under the Special Features menu.

The **Study Your Options series of booklets** is available to help you complete the application form. You will find copies where you pick up a paper application and online at **www.alis.gov.ab.ca**

Complete Schedule 4

Schedule 4 is a form that must be submitted along with your student funding application if you have a permanent disability and want to receive a grant for assistive services, assistive technology or a reduced course load, or if you want to receive the Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities. The Schedule 4 form is part of the student funding application package. Details about how to complete Schedule 4 are included in the student funding application package.

continued next page

PLAN IN ADVANCE!

To complete a student loan application, you will need:

- **a Social Insurance Number (SIN)**
- **an Alberta Student Number (ASN) from your Alberta High School transcript or go to www.education.gov.ab.ca to obtain one**
- **name, address and phone number of a next of kin or contact person**
- **exact start and end dates of your school term at the post-secondary institution, including program and specialization/major**
- **employment earnings for four months immediately before you start this post-secondary term (estimates allowed)**
- **monthly living costs and resources while you are attending a post-secondary program, including vehicle information (estimates allowed—use the budget activity above)**
- **costs of tuition (use actual, if possible), books and supplies.**

You will also need to complete and attach a Schedule 4 with your application.

Helpful hint...

Visit a career consultant or a disability service office at the post-secondary institution you are interested in early in the process. Bring with you as much of the necessary documentation as you have. Tell the consultant/disability service office about your plans and the steps you have taken so far.

The relationship that you establish with the consultants through this visit will lay the groundwork for the review of your student funding application and the signing of Schedule 4. To locate an Alberta Service Centre or Canada-Alberta Service Centre, turn to Resources.

How to apply for post-secondary funding
continued

If your permanent disability limits you from taking a full course load, you may enroll in 40 to 59 per cent of a full course load and be deemed a full-time student for financial assistance purposes. In order to confirm that you are taking a reduced course load, you must have your Schedule 4 signed by the authorized official at your post-secondary school (for example, the coordinator for students with permanent disabilities).

You must have your Schedule 4 signed by an Employment, Immigration and Industry consultant. To find the service centre nearest you, and to obtain the most current information regarding Schedule 4, visit **www.alis.gov.ab.ca**

LEARNING ASSESSMENT FEE REIMBURSEMENT

If you require a learning assessment, the Canada Study Grant program will cover 75 per cent of this cost up to a maximum of $1,200 per loan year. **You must pay for the assessment yourself** and then, if you qualify, you will be reimbursed through the Canada Study Grant program. The assessment must be dated no earlier than six months prior to the commencement of your post-secondary studies.

Other funding sources

In addition to funding available to you to help with disability-related costs, you and your parents can also consider the funding sources discussed in this section.

Scholarships and bursaries for students with disabilities

There are several scholarships available specifically for students with disabilities. You can find out more about these opportunities at:

- the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution you are applying to
- the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) website, **www.neads.ca**, in their guide *National Directory of Financial Assistance Programs for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities* available at their Online Resource Centre.

Other scholarships and bursaries

Many scholarships and bursaries are available, if you know where to look and start looking early. Governments, school boards, schools, post-secondary institutions, industry, businesses, community

Grants and bursaries

The provincial and federal governments also provide grants and bursaries. Unlike loans, grants and bursaries do not need to be repaid. They are awarded to students based on financial and other special needs. You are automatically considered for the following awards when you apply for student funding, except for the French Fellowships, which require a separate application:

Alberta Opportunities Bursaries—for first or second year students who qualify for a government student loan, demonstrate high financial need and are attending post-secondary studies at a participating Alberta institution

Canada Millennium Bursary—up to $3,000 per year for undergraduate students who qualify for a government student loan, demonstrate a high financial need and are enrolled in their second or subsequent year of undergraduate studies at a recognized institution in Canada

Maintenance Grants—for disadvantaged students

Fellowships for Full-time Studies in French—up to $500 per semester for students enrolled in full-time studies taught in French

Millennium Alberta Rural Incentive Bursary—up to $1,000 per loan year for students who attended high school in rural Alberta or lived in rural Alberta for 12 consecutive months prior to attending a post-secondary institution, and who are attending the first or second year of an undergraduate program of at least two years in length at an educational institution in Canada.

and service organizations all offer scholarships. Most are awarded based on academic achievement, sometimes in combination with other factors such as community service.

For example, Alberta students can earn up to $2500 through Alexander Rutherford Scholarships. These scholarships are awarded to students when they enroll in post-secondary institutions and have earned an 80 per cent average in selected and designated high school courses in at least one grade in high school. Students typically apply for this scholarship in the spring of their Grade 12 year and it is paid during the first semester of post-secondary studies.

Alberta students interested in an apprenticeship program may be eligible for the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board Registered Apprenticeship Program Scholarship, known as the RAP Scholarship. It provides $1,000 for up to 500 high school students who have participated in RAP and wish to continue in a regular apprenticeship program after finishing high school.

Financial support for Aboriginal students

Financial support for post-secondary studies is available to Inuit and Status Indian students living on or off reserve through the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). To qualify for this support, students must be identified as Status Indians under the federal *Indian Act*. Most individual First Nations bands establish their own criteria for selection. Students who are status and on a band list can contact their own band administrative office for more information. Policies and programs vary across the country and across the province. Additional information on specific benefits is also available from regional and district offices of INAC, Health Canada, First Nations band offices and tribal councils.

The Métis Nation of Alberta provides funding for Métis students entering or returning to post-secondary studies. For more information, contact the Métis Nation of Alberta at (780) 423 2237.

In addition, the current directory *Scholarships, Bursaries and Awards for Aboriginal Students* lists over 500 sources of funding available to Aboriginal students entering or returning to post-secondary studies. For a copy of the directory, contact the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada office (INAC) closest to you.

continued next page

and more...

Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)

An RESP is a tax-sheltered savings plan that becomes taxable once the beneficiary is ready to go to a post-secondary educational institution. Since students usually have little other income, they pay little or no tax on RESP income. Even a few dollars a month will add up in this savings plan, which allows a maximum contribution of $4,000 per year. A variety of financial institutions offer family, non-family and group plans for investors wishing to start an RESP. It is a good idea to talk about this investment with several financial institutions to determine your best choice. Be aware that there are a number of rules associated with an RESP. Make sure you understand the details of the plan before you make a commitment to invest.

The Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan

This program contributes $500 to the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) of every child born to Alberta residents in 2005 and beyond. The program is designed to give parents an incentive to start planning and saving for their child's post-secondary education as early as possible. Subsequent grants of $100 will be available to children attending school in Alberta at ages 8, 11 and 14. Under a legislative amendment passed in the fall of 2005, all children will be eligible for the grants in the years they reach these ages, provided parents invest at least $100 in an RESP before applying for the grant. Check **www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/aces/** for updated information.

Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)

The CESG is a grant from the Government of Canada that contributes to a child's RESP. The CESG adds 20 per cent to the first $2,000 in contributions made to an RESP each year, to a maximum of $400 per year. Visit the Human Resources and Social Development Canada website at **www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca** for more information about this grant.

Grants and bursaries

The provincial and federal governments also provide grants and bursaries. Unlike student loans, grants and bursaries do not need to be repaid. They are awarded to students based on financial and other special needs. You are automatically considered for the following awards when you apply for student funding, except for the French Fellowships, which require a separate application:

Alberta Opportunities Bursaries—for first or second year students who qualify for a government student loan, demonstrate high financial need and are attending post secondary studies at a participating Alberta institution

Canada Millennium Bursary—up to $3,000 per year for undergraduate students who qualify for a government student loan, demonstrate a high financial need and are enrolled

Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)

An RESP is a tax-sheltered savings plan that becomes taxable once the beneficiary is ready to go to a post-secondary educational institution. Since students usually have little other income, they pay little or no tax on RESP income. Even a few dollars a month will add up in this savings plan, which allows a maximum contribution of $4,000 per year. A variety of financial institutions offer family, non-family and group plans for investors wishing to start an RESP. It is a good idea to talk about this investment with several financial institutions to determine your best choice. Be aware that there are a number of rules associated with an RESP. Make sure you understand the details of the plan before you make a commitment to invest.

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The Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, means getting a head start in building a portfolio. Beginning in Grade 10, students can start learning a trade...gaining real work experience and getting paid!

In addition to a wage, RAP apprentices may earn credits toward their high school diploma and begin acquiring the hours of on-the-job training required to become a certified journeyperson.

For more information visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Other funding sources
continued

Family contributions

Your parents may be able to contribute to your post-secondary education funding. For example, you may be able to live at home while you are attending a program. Your family may be planning to contribute financially, too. Talk about funding in detail with your parents to find out if, and with how much, they will be able to help you out.

Your contributions

You may be able to contribute to funding your education by making and saving money from a summer or part-time job. Look for jobs that expose you to different types of work. Remember, though, that your job during the school term is to succeed in your school work to the best of your ability. Working part-time while you are going to school can be a good way to gain skills and experience. However, be sure that this commitment does not jeopardize your academic goals or your health.

You may also want to save some of your allowance, birthday money, investment or other money you make.

Student loans

You may be eligible to receive student loans sponsored by the federal and provincial governments. As discussed earlier, you will be applying for a student loan in order to access government grants for students with disabilities. These loans are available to full-time students and to students with disabilities who are enrolled in a reduced course load and who are attending a certified post-secondary institution. Government loans are interest- and payment-free until you leave school, at which point they must be repaid with interest, like any other loan.

Loans issued directly by a bank or other financial institution may be another alternative if you do not qualify for a government sponsored student loan.

Tips from families who save

- Open an RESP for your teen.
- Teach teens to manage money by providing an allowance they can use for personal expenses.
- Encourage teens to split their allowances into three envelopes: a. one for spending; b. one for short-term savings; c. and one for long-term savings.
- Open a savings account with your teen and advise your teen to put some money in it every month. You may decide to match your teen's savings.
- Explain the meaning of interest and review your teen's bank statements with him or her.
- Set a good example when making purchases. Discuss major household purchases with your teen, explain the importance of comparison shopping and avoid impulse buying.
- Support your teen's efforts to make money by taking on a part-time job like babysitting, lawn-mowing or other activity, if possible, to save for post-secondary education.
- Find games that your teen can take part in that teach money skills.
- Limit your debt. If you have accumulated credit card debt, consolidate it through a loan from a reputable financial institution. You will be able to pay off the debt at a much lower interest rate.
- Set financial goals of your own. Start saving today.

Adapted from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series. (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Advanced Education, 2004)

Information sources for funding my post-secondary

Use the following activity to make sure you cover all the bases in your search for information about funding your post-secondary education.

Source	Date and contact for follow-up
The Disability Service Office (DSO) at the post-secondary institution(s) you are interested in	
High school counsellor	
Organizations listed online at the NEADS website **www.neads.ca**	
Other Internet sources	
Foundations, religious organizations, community organizations, local businesses, cultural groups, sports organizations and civic groups	
Organizations, including professional associations, in my field of interest	
My parents' employers	
Other	

Adapted from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series. (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Advanced Education, 2004).

Information sources for funding my post-secondary

Use the following activity to make sure you cover all the bases in your search for information about funding your post-secondary education.

I have estimated the cost of my post-secondary education.

I know the amount I can contribute toward my post-secondary education.

I know the amount my parents can contribute to my post-secondary education.

I have a Social Insurance Number.

I have met with Disability Service Office (DSO) staff at the institution(s) I am interested in, provided them with documentation about my disability and accommodation needs and discussed my program application and my student funding application or

I have met with an Employment, Immigration and Industry consultant to discuss my student funding application. For current information regarding student funding application and Schedule 4 please check the ALIS website at **www.alis.gov.ab.ca**

I have completed my student funding application.

I have completed a Schedule 4 and checked on the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca for updates and changes to the application process.

An Employment, Immigration and Industry consultant has signed my Schedule 4.

I have attached a Schedule 4 to my student funding application.

I have attached a medical certificate or learning assessment (to document my disability) to my student funding application.

I have obtained two separate estimates of the cost of any assistive equipment I need and attached them to my student funding application.

I have arranged for a learning assessment, if necessary, timed so that it is completed no more than six months prior to the start of my post-secondary studies.

My parents and I have arranged to pay for my learning assessment, if necessary, until we receive reimbursement through the Canada Study Grant program.

I have submitted my student funding application before May 31 for my September program.

I have researched and applied for other funding, such as scholarships and bursaries, as appropriate.

Post-secondary institutions offer scholarships for apprentices attending technical training at their institution. Trade related associations might also have scholarships or financial assistance available to their members. For more information, contact the institution or association directly.

To learn more about RAP and Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships, visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Success stories

You don't want special treatment. It's understanding you're looking for.

Kim chose the University of Alberta because of its four-year education degree program and its support program for students with learning disabilities.

Distance learning worked well for **Roman** in high school so he chose Athabasca University. He says the distance learning format is his accommodation. "I'm not pushed into groups, I can work on social development on my own terms and I'm not constantly being forced into anxiety-producing situations," he explains. Roman also appreciates the standardized approach to courses that the University of Athabasca offers.

Renée chose Mount Royal College because of the support it offers. Because it is a smaller school with smaller class sizes, all her professors know her name, which is a big advantage if you have a

Choosing a post-secondary program

THERE ARE MANY, MANY OPTIONS TO EXPLORE and lots of details to think about as you make your decision about which post-secondary program you want to attend. It is a good idea to narrow down your choices by the end of Grade 11.

Step one: Research your options

This step begins with knowing your dreams, interests, strengths and challenges and exploring your career options. If you have not completed the activities in part one, why not do them now? They will help you through this part of your transition planning.

Consider differences

You can enroll in post-secondary studies at colleges, universities and technical institutes.

Colleges:

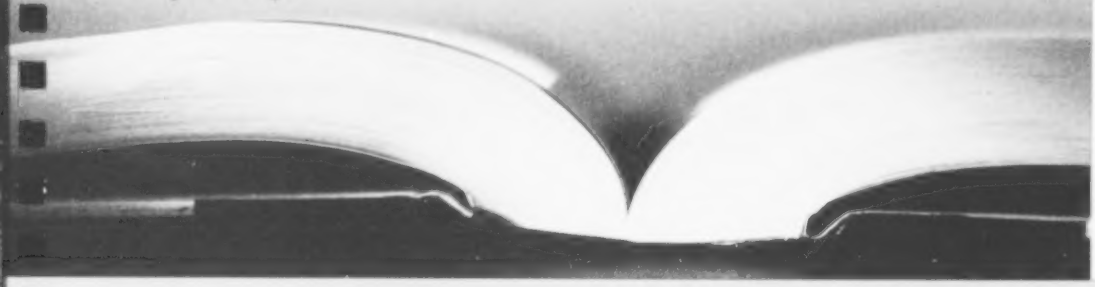
- offer certificate, apprenticeship, diploma and applied degree programs ranging from a few months to four years
- tend to offer programs related to specific occupations; for example, Diploma in Graphic Design
- may offer transfer programs that allow you to begin a degree program at the college, then transfer to a university to complete it
- tend to have smaller classes and a more close-knit community.

Universities:

- offer degrees and a variety of other certificate and diploma programs ranging from one to eight or more years
- tend to offer programs that are broad in scope or specific to a profession; for example, Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Engineering
- usually require higher entrance marks, research skills and more written work.

continued next page

One way to find out about the differences among post-secondary institutions is to read their calendars (guides to policies, programs and courses at the institutions). Ask your high school counsellor if you can borrow some calendars or contact the institutions directly.



disability. "You don't want special treatment," she explains. "It's understanding you're looking for. All of my professor have understood and supported my needs."

James has always known that without a post-secondary education, his chances of getting a job would be minimal. Originally intending to be a teacher, he reconsidered after meeting with advisors. "They asked me if I thought I could control a class of 25 students and suggested counselling as an alternative direction. After a night of feeling down, I knew I had to shake off my disappointment and go on," James remembers. "Listen to your advisors," he suggests. "Balance what they tell you against what you know about yourself."

Technical institutes:

- offer certificate, apprenticeship, diploma and applied degree programs ranging from a few months to four years
- tend to offer programs that are "hands-on"
- often develop programs in response to industry and labour market needs.

Private vocational schools:

- offer vocational training for a specific occupation. Programs are usually shorter in length and focus on basic training.

Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, opens the door for high school students to gain work experience, and develop skills and abilities in a career they are interested in pursuing after high school. In return, RAP employers pay the apprentices' wage, and provide on-the-job training in one of Alberta's more than 50 trades.

Visit websites

The Internet makes researching your options much easier. Websites for post-secondary institutions and programs will give you a feel for their focus, atmosphere and resources. Many sites post pages where frequently asked questions (FAQs) are answered. You will find links to the websites for Alberta's post-secondary institutions at **www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca** Choose "Post-Secondary" from the menu on the left. Or consult the "Resource guide for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities" available from the Alberta Committee for Citizens with Disabilities at **www.accd.net**

Use the features on your website browser program or the following chart to keep track of your research.

Talk to others about the program

Talking to current students and recent graduates of a program can give you a good idea of what it is like. You can also find out about a program's reputation

Website visit log

Name of post-secondary institution or program	Web address	Date of first visit

by talking with people who work in the field. How can you find these people? Ask:

- your network—your parents, your transition planning team, your teachers, your friends, your friends' parents and so on
- the Disability Service Office staff at the post-secondary institution
- program advisors at the post-secondary institution
- professional organizations and companies that work in areas related to the program.

Visit

Take advantage of opportunities to visit the post-secondary institutions and programs you are interested in:

- Attend open houses.
- Take a campus tour, if one is available.
- Make an appointment to visit the Disability Service Office (DSO). (For more information about what to discuss, see Step 3.)
- Make an appointment to talk with the program advisor.
- Ask the program advisor and the DSO about opportunities to shadow students in the program and students with disabilities who are attending the institution.
- Visit the campus with a friend or parent and explore.

Always be a first-rate version of yourself, rather than a second-rate version of somebody else.

Judy Garland

Special features/ things to note	Questions to ask	My rating	Other

Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, opens the door for high school students to gain work experience, and develop skills and abilities in a career they are interested in pursuing after high school. In return, RAP employers pay the apprentices' wage, and provide on-the-job training in one of Alberta's more than 50 trades.

Always **be** a first-rate version of yourself, rather than a second-rate version of somebody else.

Judy Garland

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

Anais Nin

Step two: Think about your needs and preferences

Post-secondary studies are anything but "one size fits all." After you have researched and explored the options, take some time to seriously consider what kind of post-secondary experience will best reflect your needs and preferences.

Full- or part-time studies

As mentioned earlier in part two, students with disabilities can enroll in 40 to 59 per cent of a full course load and still be considered for full-time funding. Will taking less than a full course load allow you to get better marks and stay healthy? Could you begin with a part-time course load and then gradually add more courses in the following semesters, if you are maintaining the marks you want, without too much stress?

Classroom or distance learning

Some institutions offer entire programs online. You need to decide if you prefer to learn in a classroom atmosphere or online or in a combination of the two. Distance learning could be a good choice for the following reasons:

- You would not have to live away from home.
- You can "attend class" whenever you want to and work at the time of day that is best for you.
- You do not have to deal with accessibility issues or crowds.

With distance learning you will have access to instructors and there is often a requirement that you take part in online forums or tutorials with others in your course.

Be aware, however, that distance learning requires high levels of motivation and discipline. It works best for those who are comfortable in a self-directed environment.

Living at home or moving away

You may be thinking about moving away if:

- the program you want is only available in another location
- you want the independence or the perspective of living on your own.

If you are planning on moving away, think about whether you will live:

- in a student residence or dormitory
- in a shared apartment or other space
- on your own.

Even if you are anxious to leave home, you may want to think about postponing this move until later. The step from high school to post-secondary studies is a big one. While you are adjusting to the change, you may benefit from the kind of support that is available to you at home.

Large institution or small

A large institution can be overwhelming—bigger class sizes, more anonymity. Some students thrive in this kind of environment, while others prefer smaller institutions. Some students start their post-secondary studies at a smaller institution like a college and eventually transfer to a larger setting to complete their programs.

Step three: Assess the disability services

Many post-secondary institutions provide services to students with disabilities through a disability services office (DSO), which may also be known as Accessibility Services or the Office for Students with Disabilities or by a similar name. Other institutions offer services to students with disabilities through their health, student and financial services.

It is very important to contact the DSO (or the staff assigned to assist students with disabilities) at the institutions on your short list, about a year in advance of the start of your program. Meet with them in person, if possible.

The DSO will help you:

- understand admission requirements
- apply to the program
- identify scholarships, bursaries and grants to apply for
- apply for funding
- identify documentation and learning assessments you may require for accommodations or assistive technology
- arrange for a learning assessment, if necessary
- arrange accommodations, assistive technology or other supports
- advocate, as necessary
- deal with disclosure issues
- connect with groups and other kinds of support on-campus
- determine an appropriate course load.

When you talk with the DSO, you need to make sure that:

- the campus or program area is fully accessible, if necessary
- the institution can arrange the accommodations and supports you require
- you understand the formal or informal appeal process, if you are not admitted and/or if your application for accommodation is not successful.

When your assessments are complete, you will meet again with DSO staff to develop a **service plan**. Also known as an education or accommodations plan, it describes the accommodations or other supports you are eligible for. Your service plan should ensure that the supports you need are in place when you begin your studies.

Success stories

How have Kim, Roman, Randy and Jason gained more independence?

"In Grade 10, my parents said I needed to make an appointment with each of my teachers and go by myself and explain about my disability — I was terrified! But it forced me to start being independent," says **Kim**. Now, she would encourage other parents to do the same thing. Leaving home to go to university was also a big step for Kim but she says that the learning disabilities program helped her feel more independent by helping her develop her skills.

Emotionally and academically independent, **Roman** is currently living with a parent and feeling like it's time for a change. "I'm anxious about getting out on my own," he says. "But I've had some practice with day-to-day independence when my mother has been on vacation." Roman has worked hard to develop his employability skills in the last couple of years so he can afford to live independently.

continued next page

The key to independence is owning your disability – not letting it make you feel inferior.

Step four: Make your decision and apply for post-secondary studies

There are many ways to make this decision. You may choose to base it on:

- disability services and access—for example, will you receive the accommodations and supports you need?
- location—for example, are you prepared to move away to study?
- funding—for example, can you afford to pay for a four-year program?
- kind of institution—for example, do you prefer college or university?
- quality and reputation of post-secondary institution or program—for example, is it important to you that your degree comes from a well-recognized program at a prestigious university?

You may also decide to base your decision on the choice that "feels right."

Whatever your choice, make sure you are familiar with:

- admission requirements and deadlines
- documentation requirements for the program
- documentation and assessment requirements for requesting accommodation or assistive technology.

There is only one success—to be able to spend your life in your own way.

Christopher Morley

How have Kim, Roman, Renée and James gained their independence?

continued

As an oldest child, **Renée** feels she was raised to live independently. Leaving a small town in Alberta to work in the Netherlands for a year also helped her to mature. Currently, she lives off campus with roommates. But she says the key to independence is "owning your disability — not letting it make you feel inferior."

James' parents encouraged him not to let his disability stand in his way. By 14 his mobility and orientation skills were advanced enough for him to have his first guide dog—a significant step toward adult-style independence.

Assessing the choices

Make a copy of this page for each post-secondary program or post-secondary institution you are interested in.

Institution and program:

Entrance requirements:

Diploma/certificate/degree offered:

Program length: Tuition cost per year:

Application deadline:

Application documentation:

Program contact:

phone:

e-mail:

What I like about the program:

My concerns about the program:

My rating for the program:

Disability services office contact:

phone:

e-mail:

What I like about the disability services office:

My concerns about the disability services office:

My rating for the disability services office:

Other comments:

Overall rating:

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

Notes

PART 03

For parents

01 A word to parents about transition

02 Encouraging career exploration

04 Encouraging self-advocacy

05 Understanding accommodations and learning assessments

07 Your leadership in the transition planning process

08 Record keeping

09 Final words

10 Bibliography

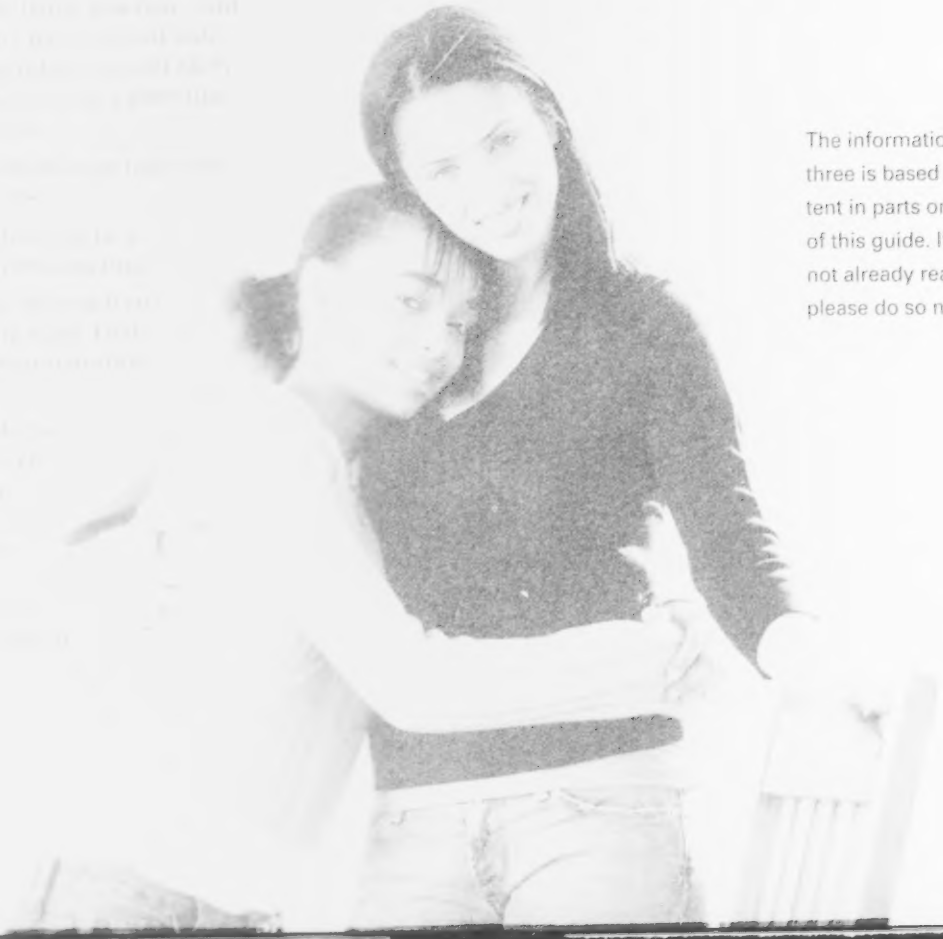
11 Resources

Nothing in life
is to be feared.
It is only to be
understood.

Marie Curie

A word to parents about transition

Fairness does not mean treating everyone the same way. It consists of giving each person what he really needs.



The information in part three is based on the content in parts one and two of this guide. If you have not already read them, please do so now.

A word to parents about transition

AS A PARENT, YOU ARE YOUR TEEN'S GREATEST SUPPORTER. You know your teen's strengths, abilities, skills, interests, hopes, dreams and challenges better than anyone. For this reason, your involvement in the transition planning process is vital.

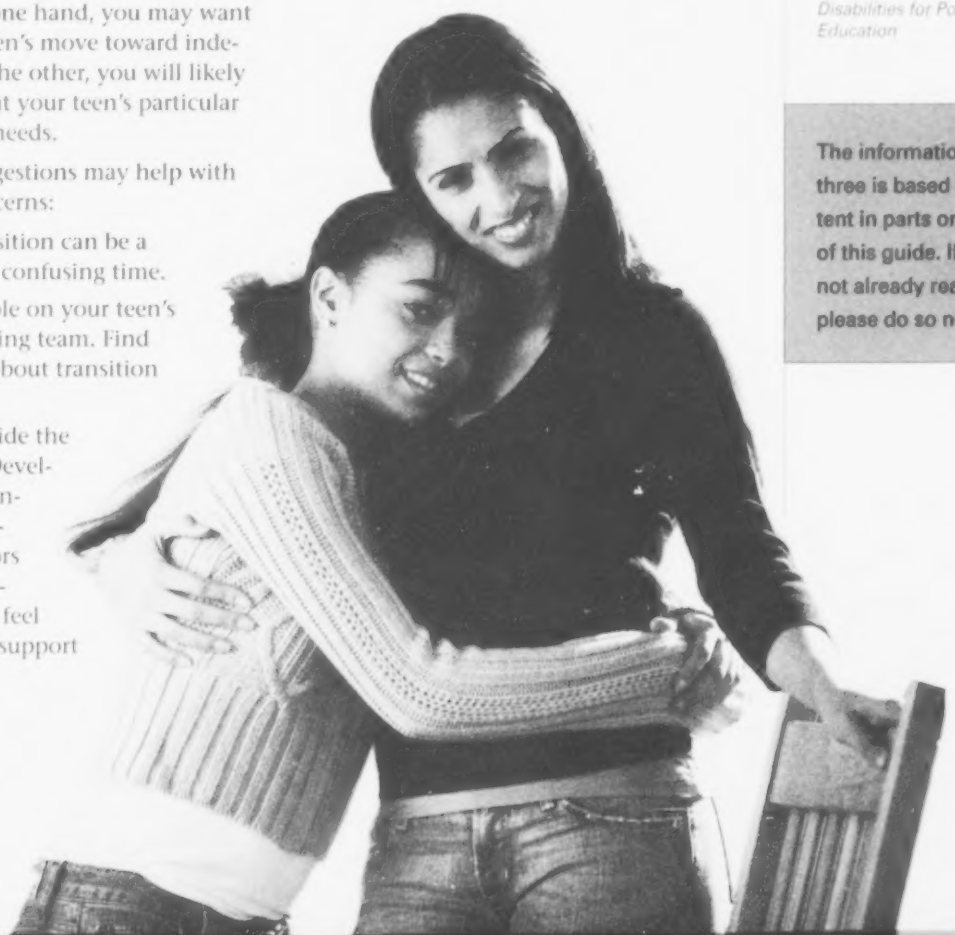
Transition is an ongoing process that will take months or even years to complete. Expect your role in the process to be both rewarding and demanding. You may at times find yourself surrounded by experts who are focusing on your teen's disability and the challenges that go along with it. One of the hardest and most important tasks you face is to maintain a positive attitude and high expectations for, and of, your teen. How you view your teen can have a profound influence on how others view your teen.

Throughout the transition process, you may feel the strong pull of your teen towards independence, which is a perfectly normal part of growing up. Your teen's disability may make it hard for you to decide how to react. On one hand, you may want to support your teen's move toward independence but on the other, you will likely be concerned about your teen's particular health and safety needs.

The following suggestions may help with some of these concerns:

- Accept that transition can be a challenging and confusing time.
- Take an active role on your teen's transition planning team. Find out all you can about transition planning.
- Find support inside the school system. Develop strong relationships with teachers, administrators and other professionals who you feel understand and support your teen.
- Join (or create) a support group for parents of teens with the same disability as your teen.
- Identify your needs.
- Do not assume you know what your teen needs—ask and then really listen to and value your teen's answer. Work together towards a solution, one step at a time.
- Encourage your teen to take a key role in making decisions, planning, researching and other aspects of transition, as appropriate.

Every teen has hopes and dreams. It is a parent's task and privilege to help shape those hopes and dreams into realistic, attainable goals.



Fairness does not mean treating everyone the same way. It consists of giving each person what he really needs.

Drover, Owen and Wilson, *A Family Affair: Preparing Parents and Students with Learning Disabilities for Postsecondary Education*

The information in part three is based on the content in parts one and two of this guide. If you have not already read them, please do so now.

Encouraging career exploration

INTERESTED IN LEARNING A TRADE?

For information, contact your local Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Connecting work with school

To help your teen understand the importance of high school to a future career, point out connections between the world of school and the world of work. For example, if your teen's future career plan is to become a chef, you could help him or her see the connection between science and food production and preparation. Point out the connection between math and measuring ingredients or bulk ordering supplies for a commercial kitchen or managing a restaurant budget. If these seem like a stretch, then be sure to equate good marks with future opportunities, including entrance requirements for post-secondary programs.

Encourage your teen to problem solve in a variety of everyday situations so he or she understands how classroom learning can be of benefit throughout life. Take your teen to your workplace and talk about your work with your teen. When you keep the lines of communication open about what you are doing at work and about what your teen is doing at school, you can help your teen make connections between formal learning and real life situations.

Discovering interests

Help your teen to identify interests and to connect interests to specific occupations. Encourage your teen to talk about topics related to careers and post-secondary education planning. Listen to your teen's ideas. Help your teen find mentors in his or her field of interest.

Exploring volunteer and part-time work

Explore volunteer work as a family. If you participate in your community, your teen will be more likely to do the same. Volunteering can be a good way for teens to make contacts in the community and the larger world of work and to learn new skills.

If it is appropriate, encourage your teen to find part-time work that uses and develops his or her skills. Help your teen develop strategies to manage his or her disability at work. Encourage your teen to use time management skills to ensure that school remains the number one priority.

Finding career information

Look for ways to help your teen explore and learn about occupations:

- Encourage your friends and family members to talk about their work. Every family gathering is an opportunity for aunts, uncles and grandparents to tell their career stories.
- Encourage your teen to talk to friends and older students about their career explorations.
- Seek opportunities for your teen to meet and talk with business people, professionals and skilled tradespersons. Suggest that your teen find out what kind of post-secondary education is required for the positions featured in the career stories he or she hears.
- Check out job shadowing opportunities through the school, as well as your own network.
- Encourage your teen to visit a career day on-campus or at school.

Encouraging your teen to think about transition

- Talk with your teen about adult life—interests, what matters, friends, how time might be spent.
- Help your teen understand that once a decision is made, it does not mean that it cannot be changed. Sometimes things do not work out. You are "allowed" to change your mind.
- Look at the messages your teen is receiving about his or her future from all sources. Develop the positive messages that you want your teen to understand.
- Find out what your teen loves to do and encourage the development of any natural strengths. Emphasize these strengths as you and your teen look at post-secondary choices.

- Treat barriers as challenges that may lead to something new.
- Be conscious of the skills your teen is developing and look for ways to develop them even further.
- Allow your teen the opportunity to make mistakes. Dealing with mistakes in a positive way is a necessary part of learning to be independent.

Career exploration checklist

Discovering interests and careers

I listen to my teen and discuss interests, hopes and dreams.

I help my teen explore talents, strengths and interests.

I provide books and other resources about things my teen has an interest in, including biographies and sport, hobby and discovery interests.

I set aside time to talk with my teen about goals for the next year and for the next five years.

I have taken steps to ensure that my teen will have some real experience with his or her chosen career path before graduating from high school.

Supporting my teen at school

I am familiar with my teen's school program and discuss classroom activities, assignments and exam preparation regularly.

I have set aside a place in the home where my teen can study in quiet and with appropriate learning materials.

Exploring volunteer and part-time work

I read employment ads with my teen and discuss qualifications.

I support my teen in finding summer or part-time employment, as appropriate.

I regularly create opportunities for my teen to assume responsibility.

I help my teen find job shadowing opportunities.

Planning for post-secondary

My teen and I are taking active roles on the transition planning team.

I encourage my teen to explore post-secondary programs that reflect his or her interests and strengths.

My teen and I are developing a financial plan for post-secondary education.

This section is adapted from the Alberta Government *Planning for Post-Secondary Studies* series, Alberta Advanced Education, 2004 and from the Alberta Government *Looking to the Future*, Alberta Education, 2006.

We can do anything we want to do if we stick to it long enough.

Helen Keller

Encouraging self-advocacy

YOUR TEEN WILL LEARN SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS by watching how you advocate on his or her behalf. By modelling effective advocacy skills, you will prepare your teen to eventually take over your role. The other members of the transition planning team will also be modelling advocacy skills.

The best advocates are skilled at maintaining positive working relationships while creating win-win solutions. They have a clear and realistic vision of what they want for their children and they are able to communicate this vision to others.

The Learning Team: a handbook for parents of children with special needs. Alberta Learning, 2003.

To teach your teen self-advocacy skills:

- Discuss learning strengths and challenges with your teen. Observe how your teen learns best. Offer helpful feedback.
- Encourage your teen to build on strengths.
- Involve your teen in conversations about transition planning.
- Encourage your teen to play a key role in the transition planning process by attending all meetings and taking part in discussions and decision making.
- Help your teen prepare for transition planning meetings. Encouraging him or her to write down and rehearse raising issues or concerns. Model and role-play appropriate interactions.
- Provide opportunities for making plans and decisions.
- Help your teen set and evaluate realistic learning goals.
- Effective advocates need to be organized and prepared. Help your teen achieve these standards.
- Encourage your teen to show appreciation for the efforts others make on his or her behalf. An important part of self-advocacy is the ability to positively influence others.
- Provide opportunities for your teen to meet other students and adults with disabilities. Films, books and news items about successful individuals with disabilities may be inspiring for some teens.
- Acknowledge how difficult self-advocacy can be and support your teen's attempts at it.
- Expect and allow your teen to gradually play an expanded advocacy role as he or she approaches graduation.
- Ask the members of the transition planning team for other suggestions to help your teen learn and practise self-advocacy skills.

Adapted from The Learning Team: a handbook for parents of children with special needs. Alberta Learning, 2003.

Understanding accommodations and learning assessments

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS are arrangements that support students with disabilities. Accommodations do not create an unfair advantage: they are available because disabilities put some students at a disadvantage compared to others. Students who receive accommodations must meet the same standards that all students must meet. Accommodations make sure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

To be effective, an accommodation must match the specific learning needs of the individual student. Typical accommodations include:

- tutors
- note takers
- alternate format texts, including Braille, large print or audio
- extended time for exams; special location for exams; oral exams
- assistive technology including adaptive hardware or software
- assistance in research libraries
- interpreters
- captioning services

Learning assessments enable schools and post-secondary institutions to determine what accommodations are necessary to support students with disabilities. While your teen is still in school, early identification and coding will enable the school to develop an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) that will support your teen's learning needs. The IPP will be updated as your teen progresses through the school system.

In order to receive accommodations at a post-secondary institution, your teen may need to take part in a learning assessment specifically for this purpose. Depending on how recent your teen's last assessment is, information may need to be updated. Because of the difference in academic demands between high school and post-secondary programs, your teen may require accommodations for post-secondary studies that were not required at high school.

The Disability Services Office (DSO) at the post-secondary institution your teen is interested in attending can help you set up an appropriate learning assessment, if needed. Be aware of timing—the assessment should be completed no earlier than six months prior to the start of classes. You will need to be prepared to pay for the assessment and to apply for reimbursement from the Canada Study Grant program. (See part two of this guide for more details.)

continued next page

If your teen is reluctant to disclose...

Your teen may be reluctant to disclose his or her disability and may not want to request accommodations from the Disability Service Office. In this situation, pay close attention to your teen's marks during the first semester of post-secondary studies. If the marks are lower than they should be, your teen may need to withdraw from classes before he or she is at risk of academic disqualification. Your teen can re-enroll later and request accommodations as needed. Find out about withdrawal and other policies in the institution's calendar.

DISCLOSURE

Please read "Disclosure" in part one of this guide if you have not already done so. Without disclosure your teen cannot expect to receive accommodations or supports.

Encouraging self-advocacy

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Accommodations and assessment checklist

I can describe how my teen's disability affects him or her as a student.

I can describe the accommodations and strategies my teen currently uses.

My teen and I regularly discuss strategies and accommodations with the Individualized Program Planning and transition planning teams.

I am staying up-to-date with assistive technology that might benefit my teen.

My teen and I have met with or contacted the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.

I am aware of the documentation and assessment requirements for accommodations at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.

I am aware of the documentation and assessment requirements and application process for grants and bursaries my teen may be eligible for, including learning assessment fee reimbursement.

Success stories

"If you've got a dream... run with it—even if there are hurdles you have to climb over."

"I love my job!" says **Kim**. Now that she has completed her master's degree, her focus is on getting her permanent teaching certificate. She hopes eventually to get a PhD and to become a professor. "I'll teach the teachers! Catch them early and show them how they can help all their students with disabilities!"

Travelling is a goal for **Roman**. He would like to work overseas, possibly in an internship program. He graduates soon, so finding a job is an immediate priority but he also has his sights set on graduate studies, possibly in a masters of business administration (MBA) program. "My goal is to have a work life that doesn't overwhelm my other interests," says Roman. "I need enough money for tea and the Internet."

After finishing her degree at Mount Royal College, **Renée** hopes to enroll in a graduate program in applied psychology at the University of Calgary. She would eventually like to earn a PhD in counselling psychology. She would like to work with the homeless and with troubled teens.

James is planning to complete a double masters degree in child psychology and family counselling. "If you've got a dream," he says, "take a look at it in practical terms. If it's at all attainable, run with it—even if there are hurdles you have to climb over."

Your leadership in the transition planning process

AS THE PARENT OF A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY, you have the opportunity to play a leadership role in the transition process. No one knows your teen better or cares as much about his or her future as you do. Teachers, health care professionals, mentors, friends—they are important to your teen's development but they will come and go. Chances are you have been advocating for your teen all the way through the school system, modelling a key role that your maturing teen will increasingly take on. Your support will provide the continuity that your teen needs to make a successful transition to post-secondary studies.

Use the following checklist to help you keep on track through the transition planning process.

Junior high

I help my teen identify strengths, learning preferences and strategies for successful learning.

I encourage my teen to begin looking at interests and skills.

I encourage my teen to begin career explorations.

I encourage my teen to explore post-secondary programs and admission requirements.

I help my teen select high school courses.

I encourage my teen to take part in job shadowing activities.

I help my teen practise describing how the disability affects him or her as a student and strategies that help.

I help my teen learn to communicate his or her needs effectively.

I offer my teen opportunities to practise decision making.

I help my teen investigate assistive technology.

I encourage my teen to take part in community activities and develop friendships.

I work with my teen on a plan to finance post-secondary studies.

High school

I encourage my teen to take part in transition planning, especially as an active member of the transition planning team.

I keep track of my teen's accommodations and strategies as my teen grows and changes.

I help my teen gather information about post-secondary programs and begin to narrow down post-secondary choices.

I encourage my teen to take part in volunteer and community activities and, if appropriate, part-time or summer work.

I give my teen opportunities to practise independent living skills.

I have made sure that my teen has a Social Insurance Number (SIN).

I have helped my teen get a bank account and manage it, as appropriate.

I encourage my teen to develop a résumé and portfolio.

With my teen, I continue to evaluate and refine our plan to finance post-secondary studies.

continued next page

The Registered Apprenticeship Program, RAP, means getting a head start in building a portfolio. Beginning in Grade 10, students can start learning a trade...gaining real work experience and getting paid!

In addition to a wage, RAP apprentices may earn credits toward their high school diploma and begin acquiring the hours of on-the-job training required to become a certified journeyperson.

For more information visit **www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca**

Last year of high school

- I encourage my teen to take an increased responsibility for transition planning, as appropriate.
- I have helped my teen identify and select (or choose) a post-secondary program(s).
- With my teen, I have visited the Disability Service Office at the post-secondary institution(s) my teen is interested in.
- I have helped my teen apply for admission to the program(s).
- I have helped my teen meet the requirements for accommodations at the post-secondary institution(s).
- I have helped my teen apply for funding.

We find in life exactly what we put into it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

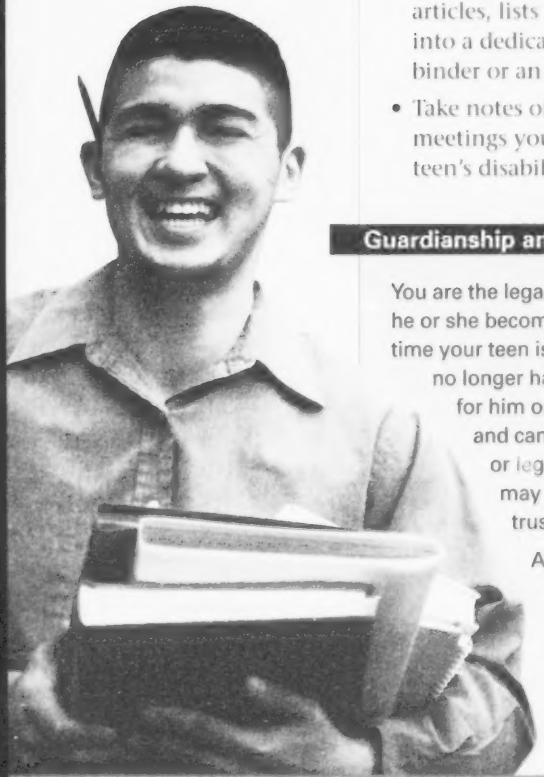
Record keeping

TAKING ON THE ROLE of record keeper is one of the most significant contributions you can make to an effective transition for your teen. You are probably already well aware of the amount of paper involved in documenting your teen's skills, strengths, challenges and needs. Organizing these records may take some time at first but it will be worth it. Having complete and accessible records will help you be more effective:

- Get into the habit of dating all reports, articles, lists and notes and sorting them into a dedicated storage system such as a binder or an expanding file.
- Take notes of all conversations and meetings you have that pertain to your teen's disability and its effects. Make sure to note who you talked to and when, their contact information and any action agreed to as an outcome.
- Compile a contact list of everyone you have talked to, or intend to talk to, about your teen's transition.

Keep the following records:

- a complete personal history of your teen, including birth certificate, medical history, tests or interventions, list of health care providers and specialists who have been or are involved
- reports and records of all learning assessments and standardized tests
- details about current and previous accommodations and strategies used by your teen



Guardianship and trusteeship

You are the legal guardian for your teen until he or she becomes 18 years of age, at which time your teen is an independent adult and you no longer have the right to make choices for him or her. A person who turns 18 and cannot make personal, financial or legal decisions for him or herself may require a guardian and/or a trustee.

A guardian is a person who has the legal authority and responsibility to make or help to make decisions about personal matters for a dependent adult. In most cases, a guardian is a close relative of a dependent adult. A trustee is someone who handles the financial and legal affairs of a dependent adult.

Depending on your teen's disability, you may want to consider trusteeship or guardianship in your transition plan.

Once your teen is 18, and if you are not your teen's guardian or trustee, Disability Service Office staff and other staff at the education institution will not be able to communicate with you about your teen's progress without your teen's written permission.

- report cards, Individualized Program Plans, course waivers or substitutions
- any correspondence with the school
- work experience reports
- information about your teen's community involvement and volunteer work
- notes you have made and minutes from Individualized Program Planning meetings
- notes you have made and minutes from transition planning meetings
- notes you have made of important phone conversations
- copies of important e-mails
- key and insightful things that others have said about your teen and you have written down
- copies of applications to post-secondary programs
- copies of application to the Canada Study Grant program
- copies of scholarship(s)/bursary(ies) applied for and letters for same regarding scholarships/bursaries awarded

Leadership checklist

I have read Parts One and Two of this guide.

I have learned all I can about my teen's disability and the accommodations and strategies available to assist my teen.

I have helped my teen choose a transition planning team.

I take an active role on the transition planning team.

I make sure my teen's and my own needs and concerns are addressed.

I am fully informed about the school programs and courses in which my teen is involved.

I encourage my teen to take part in a variety of career exploration discussions and activities.

I encourage my teen to develop self-advocacy skills.

I have taken on the role of record keeper and can access appropriate information when my teen or others need it.

Whether you think you can or you can't—you are right.

Henry Ford

Final words

THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL is a complex and exciting journey that takes time, patience, determination and above all, a belief that post-secondary education is a worthy goal to pursue.

This transition is not your child's first and it will not be the last. Use the skills and techniques you develop on this journey to help your child achieve success in their post-secondary studies and, ultimately, a rewarding career.

Bon voyage and good luck!

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British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2005

Resources

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca

This government website provides links to the websites of Alberta's post-secondary institutions as well as information about apprenticeship and adult learning.

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training

www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

This website provides information about trades and designated occupations in Alberta.

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Sponsored by Employment, Immigration and Industry, this information service helps Albertans make informed career, education and employment decisions. Career advisors are available by telephone, fax, or e-mail.

To reach the Hotline, throughout Alberta phone: 1 (800) 661 3753

- In Edmonton phone: (780) 422 4266
- Fax: (780) 422 0372
- Deaf or hard of hearing - TDD: (780) 422 5283 (Edmonton)
- Deaf or hard of hearing - Message Relay Service: 1 (800) 232 7215 (Alberta)
- Online: at *www.alis.gov.ab.ca* Click on "Career Information Hotline" then on "e-Question"

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

www.accd.net

ACCD is a consumer-directed organization that actively promotes full participation in society for Albertans with disabilities. This website provides links to many other disability advocacy groups. You can access their Resource guide for Post-Secondary Students from this site.

Alberta Education

www.education.gov.ab.ca

This government website provides information for students and parents including curriculum handbooks, transcripts, homework help and more.

Alberta Education's Learning Resources Centre (LRC)

www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca

This website lists learning resources available for purchase. You can also phone (780) 427 5775. (For toll free access, dial 310 0000 first).

Employment, Immigration and Industry Service Centres

www.alis.gov.ab.ca/career/cs/

Visit this site to locate a career consultant through an Alberta Service Centre or Canada-Alberta Service Centre near you.

Alberta Learning Information Service

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

This website provides a wealth of career, learning and employment information and services. Look here for information about

- occupational profiles
- student loans, scholarships, grants and bursaries information
- links to other resources
- useful publications you can download.

Canada's Schoolnet

www.schoolnet.ca

Canada's Schoolnet is a partnership of governments, the education community and the private sector. This website provides links to over 7,000 online learning resources.

continued next page

Resources
continued

CanLearn

www.canlearn.ca

This Government of Canada website helps you save, plan and pay for your post-secondary education. The site provides a calculator for estimating costs and links to scholarship opportunities.

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

www.ccdonline.ca

CCD is a national advocacy group for Canadians with disabilities.

e-Career Shop Catalogue

www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop

The Catalogue offers current, well-researched and easy to understand career, learning and employment resources. Most of the print materials are available free of charge in Alberta and many can be downloaded directly from the site.

Human Resources and Social Development Canada

www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

This website provides links to job search and career development programs and services.

Mazemaster/Youth@bilities

www.mazemaster.on.ca — click on "Youth@bilities"

This Ontario government site for youth who have disabilities provides online information about employment, education and training. Youth@bilities' resources include a quarterly e-newsletter, a "What's New" page and information about independent living, advocacy, arts, culture and recreation.

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)

www.neads.ca

NEADS advocates for increased accessibility at all levels so that disabled students may gain equal access to college or university education. Click on "Moving On" for information about the transition from high school to post-secondary studies.

Student Finance

www.alis.gov.ab.ca/studentsfinance

Start looking here for information about financial assistance for post-secondary education. You can also call the Student Funding Contact Centre (SFCC) at 427 3722 in Edmonton, or 1 (800) 222 6485 across Canada.

Scholarship Connections

www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/connections.asp

Students can search over 300 scholarships, grants, bursaries and awards, including those that target students with disabilities, on this website.

Transition Planning guide: Feedback

WE HOPE THIS RESOURCE IS HELPFUL to students with disabilities and their parents. Please let us know by filling out the following form and returning it to:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
Learner Services Branch
7th Floor, 9940 – 106 St., Sterling Place
Edmonton, AB T5K 2V1

This resource offers practical information that I can use to help plan the transition from high school to post-secondary studies.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

This resource is well-organized and easy to read and use.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

The information in this resource helps me understand the transition planning process and encourages me to take part.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

The activities in this resource are helpful and I plan to use them.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

Thank you. We welcome your feedback and suggestions:

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For additional copies of this publication contact:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
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Toll-free 310 0000

Various websites are listed in this document. These sites are listed as a service only. Individuals using the sites are responsible for evaluating the relevance and accuracy of the information.

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